

The University Guide for Access to HE

Tutor Guide

Welcome

Welcome to the University Guide for Access students, tutors and HE admissions staff. This pack is a collaborative effort between the Mature Students' Adviser at the University of Bristol and the former Access Co-ordinator at City of Bristol College. It was funded by a Widening Participation Initiative Bid at the University of Bristol. The aim of the project has been to clarify and develop progression opportunities for Access applicants by providing them with guidance on the process of applying to HE, writing personal statements, succeeding at HE interviews and making important decisions throughout this process about what to study and where to study. There is a section for Access tutors with information on writing effective references and a further section for HE admissions staff with information on Access courses and how to evaluate Access applications.

We would like to say a special thank you to John Lenz from the City of Bristol College for the use of his invaluable online UCAS application guide and also to all of the staff and students at both institutions who contributed to the project.

We hope that you find it useful.



Betsy Bowerman



Carol Fox



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Writing the Reference

What to include – by paragraph

1. Introductory paragraph explaining the Access to HE Diploma programme. Always include the validating AVA and core programme followed.

'The Access to HE Diploma is an intensive programme, designed to prepare adults with few or no recent formal qualifications for degree level study. It is a long established course, validated by Open College Network and students must achieve a minimum of 60 credits with at least 45 at OCN level 3. Students have to complete assignments in all areas, which include written work and oral presentations, as well as undertake an in-depth study in an appropriate area. Students are also required to take a formal examination and meet necessary deadlines. All students follow a programme of Study Skills, Mathematics and Communication skills which include GCSE equivalences.'

2. Information on students' particular Access course, e.g. Access to Science. Always include option subjects studied at level 3 and any GCSE equivalencies.

'Beth has been a student on the Access to HE Diploma (Education) course since September 2009. She has chosen Education Studies, Psychology and English Literature as her optional level 3 subjects. She is also studying Communications Skills with English, Mathematics and Science to GCSE A-C equivalence.'

3. Comment on overall level of achievement to date, attendance, punctuality, meeting deadlines, work ethic and organisation/time management.

'Beth has made a really good start to the Access course. She is a very able and conscientious student and she is determined to succeed. She has excellent records of attendance, is punctual, meets all deadlines and is successfully juggling the demands of family and study. She had a high level of skill on entering the Access course and is already meeting the level 3 standard required for successful completion of the Diploma.'

4. Academic skills – comment on the standard of written work, grasp of concepts and theories, subject specific abilities, enthusiasm and potential, independent learning.

'Beth is a highly motivated and clearly focused on her choice of degree and career. Her written work is academic and shows well developed powers of analysis. Her work is coherent, fluent and well structured; she is perceptive and logical in her approach. She readily grasps concepts and theories and is an independent learner. She is really enthusiastic about her academic studies and reads widely. Her tutors think that she has considerable academic potential. Her tutors have commented on her interest and aptitude; she is a pleasure to teach.'

Include subject comment where possible:

'Beth's Education Studies tutor has commented on her commitment and interest. She is able to discuss and analyse current debates and issues in Education and makes thoughtful and relevant comments.'

5. Social and communication skills

'Beth is a quiet, friendly, outgoing student and she gets on very well with staff and fellow students. She is a good listener and supportive of her fellow students. She participates fully in class and group activities. She is articulate and makes perceptive contributions to class discussion, demonstrating very good communication skills.'

6. Final comments and recommendation

'Beth is focused in her choice of degree and future career. She shows good understanding of the commitment, rewards and challenges of teaching and is excited about starting her placement in a local primary school. We think Beth is a highly suitable candidate; we thoroughly support her application.'

How to discriminate in a positive way

How to discriminate in a positive way

1. A reference should only have positive comments. If you can't say something positive, e.g. about attendance, don't comment at all on this.
2. Make sure you do comment on attendance and punctuality if it is good. This shows that the student is serious about the commitment to study at a higher level.
3. Although you've only known the student for a short period of time, it's vital to write as fully as possible. Admissions tutors understand that you have limited knowledge of the students' abilities at this stage, but they rely on this information to help them make an informed decision on the application.
4. It is better to write as fully as possible in the main UCAS reference and provide a short supplementary update if requested later. A supplementary reference may well become more important with the introduction of grading and graded offers.
5. Choice of phrases can indicate different levels of ability and potential e.g. 'She is enjoying the challenge of study and working hard to develop her academic skills'. Compare this with: 'His written work is of a high calibre and shows well developed powers of analysis. He demonstrates an excellent understanding of concepts and theories; he is an independent learner.'
6. Final statement – here you can discriminate with words such as 'ideal candidate', or 'fully support his application' as opposed to 'She is focused in her choice of degree subject'; you can make no comment on suitability or just say 'support her application' – see the Lara Long and James Johnson sample references.

UCAS reference for James Johnson

The Access to HE Diploma is an intensive programme, designed to prepare adults with few or no recent formal qualifications for degree level study. It is a long established course, validated by Open College Network and students must achieve a minimum of 60 credits with at least 45 at OCN level 3. Students have to complete assignments in all areas, which include written work and oral presentations, as well as undertake an in-depth study in an appropriate area. Students are also required to take a formal examination and meet necessary deadlines. All students follow a programme of study skills, numeracy and communications skills. As part of the Initial Teacher Training Programme students attend a weekly placement in School.

James has been a student on the Access to Initial Teacher Training course since September 2006. He has chosen Education, Psychology and Sociology as his optional subjects. He is also studying Mathematics and Science to GCSE A-C equivalence.

James has shown himself to be a conscientious and very able student. He is already achieving at a high standard; gaining level 3 in early assignments. He has good records of attendance and punctuality and meets all deadlines. He is organised and efficient, successfully juggling the demands of work and study.

He is well motivated and enthusiastic about his academic studies. His written work is of a high calibre and shows well developed powers of analysis. He demonstrates an excellent understanding of concepts and theories; he is an independent learner. His tutors have commented on his keen interest and aptitude and think that he has considerable academic potential for degree level study.

James has a quiet, friendly and sympathetic personality, with a good sense of humour. He gets on very well with staff and peers and is very supportive of his fellow students. He participates fully in all class and group activities. In discussion he is fluent and perceptive, demonstrating excellent communication skills. He is confident and effective in oral presentation.

James is clearly focused on his choice of degree and future career. As a team we think that he is a highly suitable candidate and we strongly support his application.

James Johnson
Updated UCAS Tutor reference
Tutor – Carol Fox

James continues to make very good progress on the Access to Initial Teacher Training course. He is an extremely capable student who is achieving at a very high standard. He also continues to manage his time, maintaining good attendance and meeting assignment deadlines.

James's tutor's tutors feel that he is working very well and continues to be a highly motivated student. His written assignments are well informed, clearly structured and demonstrate astute critical thinking. His Sociology Tutor has commented on his contribution in class which shows sophisticated reflections and perceptive questioning.

James is a very able student with clear and considerable potential for study at degree level. We recommend him as a very suitable candidate for a place at Bristol University.

UCAS reference for Lara Long

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Lara has been a student on the Access to Initial Teacher Training course since September 2006. She has chosen Education, English Language and English Literature as her optional subjects. She is also studying Mathematics and Science to GCSE A-C equivalence.

Lara is a positive and motivated student. She has good records of attendance, meets deadlines and is juggling the demands of work and study. She shows a good understanding of topics studied.

Lara is enjoying the challenge of returning to study and she is working hard to develop her academic skills. She is determined to succeed and she is using her tutors and her time on the course to the full.

Lara is a quiet, friendly, student who gets on well with staff and fellow students. She participates in class activities and discussion and enjoys working in small groups. She is enjoying her current placement in a local primary school, which has given her a good understanding of the commitment, rewards and challenges of teaching. She is focused in her choice of degree studies and career.