



Training  
Qualifications UK

## **Alternative Academic Qualification Factsheet**

TQUK Level 3 AAQ Certificate in Health and Social Care

TQUK Level 3 AAQ Diploma in Health and Social Care

## What are AAQs?

Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) have been approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and, when combined with A Levels as part of a mixed-study programme, provide learners with a high-quality entry route into higher education with the added reassurance of allocated UCAS tariff points. AAQs provide a flexible and inclusive progression opportunity for learners who commence at certificate level and then have the option of working towards the diploma that builds on the knowledge and skills they have already completed.

The purpose of the AAQs in Health and Social Care is to provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to progress to higher education, and ultimately to work within the health and social care sector. They provide learners with a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in health and social care principles that complement theoretical concepts covered in the A Level curriculum. This integrated approach will enable learners to gain a full understanding of academic principles and their practical application. This will showcase their ability to apply concepts and techniques and strengthen their university/college applications giving them a competitive edge.

## What will learners study?

The AAQs seek to equip learners with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the approaches required when providing efficient and effective health and social care to an individual. The diploma comprises 8 mandatory themes and includes the 4 themes that are studied at certificate level, as outlined in the following table:

Themes	Certificate	Diploma
1. Understanding working in the health and social care sector	✓	✓
2. Health and safety in health and social care	✓	✓
3. Infection prevention and control in health and social care		✓
4. Safeguarding in adult health and social care	✓	✓
5. Equality, diversity, and inclusion in health and social care		✓
6. The person-centred approach in health and social care		✓
7. Communication and information handling in health and social care	✓	✓
8. Professional development in health and social care		✓

## The difference between the certificate and the diploma

Learners who study an AAQ have the choice between a certificate or a diploma. The certificate is equivalent to an AS Level and comprises 4 themes that learners may typically complete in one year or as part of a 2-year programme of study. Learners may choose to study the certificate to gain core knowledge of health and social care approaches and principles including adult safeguarding; health and safety, and communication in health and social care and have the option of continuing to diploma level. The diploma is equivalent to one A Level and comprises 8 themes that learners would typically complete within a 2-year study programme. The diploma builds on the 4 themes completed at the certificate level and provides learners with the opportunity to further expand their knowledge and skills of the person-centred approach; equality, diversity, and inclusion; the role of infection control and prevention, and the importance of continuing professional development to inform practice.

## The target age group



The certificate and diploma have been designed for learners aged 16-19 who wish to develop core knowledge and understanding of health and social care principles.

## Focus of the diploma

Learners will build on the core values studied at certificate level.

They will understand the importance of how these core values are incorporated into practice. Learners will continue to consider aspects of legislation relevant to each theme and will explore infection prevention and control within health and social care settings. They will focus on the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion in practice and the role of person-centred care. Learners will also gain an understanding of the importance of continuing professional development within health and social care to maintain and improve the standard of care provided to service users.

## Focus of the certificate

Learners will study the core values that underpin high-quality health and social care provision and explore how the values are incorporated into practice. They will learn about legislation and how it impacts health and social care provision. They will explore health and safety concerns and the measures to put in place to maintain a safe working environment. They will gain an understanding of safeguarding, signs of abuse or neglect, and the reporting mechanisms to follow when concerns are raised. Learners will explore communication and accurate record-keeping, the role of confidentiality, and the importance of complying with data protection legislation.

## Total Qualification Time (TQT)

An estimate of the overall time a learner will typically take to achieve and demonstrate the required level of attainment:

Qualification	Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Direct Study	Total qualification time (TQT)
TQUK Level 3 AAQ Certificate in Health and Social Care	180	20	200
TQUK Level 3 AAQ Diploma in Health and Social Care	360	40	400

## Assessment

The qualifications are assessed holistically and comprise an examined assessment (EA) and a non-exam assessment (NEA). The NEA will be released each year in September. The assessment weightings are:

Qualification	Examined assessment (EA)	Non-exam assessment (NEA)
TQUK Level 3 AAQ Certificate in Health and Social Care	40%	60%
TQUK Level 3 AAQ Diploma in Health and Social Care	40%	60%

## HE progression

The qualifications have been designed to support progression to higher education. They may support entry to the following degree programmes:

- Community Specialist Practice
- Health and Care Management
- Health and Social Care
- Healthcare Science
- Health, Nutrition, and Lifestyle
- Nursing
- Midwifery
- Professional Practice
- Public Health.

## Knowledge and skills and their benefits for future study

Learners will develop specialist skills as they explore the themes including, critical thinking and the analysis of evidence to inform decision-making. They will collaborate with others on projects and case studies, develop effective communication skills, gain an increased awareness of the values and behaviours required of practitioners, and learn about ethical reasoning and advocating on behalf of individuals.

Learners will gain knowledge of legislation, care planning, evaluating an individual's care needs, monitoring an individual's progress, and the importance of accurate record-keeping and observations. This knowledge and skills development will be invaluable to learners wishing to further their studies in disciplines such as nursing, public health management, advocacy, and counselling.

## A Levels to complement the AAQs

The A Level subject areas that would complement the AAQs include Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Psychology, and Sociology. Combining the qualifications with A levels in Business Studies, Economics, or Mathematics would be advantageous for learners interested in business-related aspects of healthcare. This combination integrates business acumen, data analysis, and an understanding of regulatory frameworks, providing a comprehensive perspective on managing health services. These skills would be relevant for degrees in healthcare management or health economics.

Learners may wish to combine the qualifications with A Levels in Sociology, Politics, or Law. This would allow them to explore the social, legal, and ethical dimensions of health and social care, supporting their understanding of the broader implications of healthcare policies and social inequalities. This combination would prepare learners for entry to degrees in social work, public health, health policy, or human rights advocacy.

## Mixed Study Programmes

Our AAQs, available in both 180glh and 360glh options, can be pursued sequentially as nested qualifications or independently as standalone qualifications. They are designed to provide flexibility in mixed study programmes, allowing learners to choose the approach that best aligns with their abilities and goals. Learners can choose between full A Level or AS Level study alongside 180glh and 360glh AAQ options, depending on their desired breadth and depth in a subject, and to meet their higher education needs. Tailoring education through a combination of fewer subjects with greater depth or a broader range of subjects allows learners to better support progression to higher education. For more details, please see 'mixed study programme' examples on the next page or refer to the 'course delivery' section in the qualification specification.

### More Information

For further information about the TQUK Level 3 AAQ Certificate and Diploma in Health and Social Care, please visit the TQUK [website](#). If you're new to Training Qualifications UK, you can contact us in a variety of ways:

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@ [business.development@tquk.org](mailto:business.development@tquk.org)

🏠 [tquk.org](https://www.tquk.org)



## Mixed Study Programme Examples

This section of the factsheet is to provide an overview of A-level subjects that may be beneficial when studied alongside our Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in a mixed study program, to support progression to higher education. The following examples have been designed to illustrate the different options available to learners. These options aim to assist learners in making informed choices of qualifications based on their abilities and goals.

Nursing - Mixed study programme examples	
To progress to higher education in nursing in the UK, you should select A-level subjects that will prepare you for nursing programs and provide a strong foundation in relevant areas. Here are some A-level and AAQ subjects that can be beneficial for study in a mixed study programme that could be beneficial for aspiring nurses:	
Option 1	
A Level	Chemistry
A Level	Psychology
Small AAQ	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner may study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2, whilst studying the Diploma AAQ over 2 years. The other option is to study all 3 subjects over a 2 year period.	
Option 2	
A Level	Chemistry
A Level	Psychology
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period, whilst studying the Certificate AAQ in year 1 and then the Diploma in year 2.	
Option 3	
A Level	Chemistry
A Level	Psychology
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	180glh Certificate in Human Biology
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period. Alongside this, the learner has the option to select 2 x 180glh AAQs (equivalent to A/S Levels) whereby they will typically study one in year 1 and the other in year 2.	
Option 4	
A Level	Chemistry
A Level	Psychology
A/S Level	Sociology
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 2.5 A Levels across a typical 2 year study programme alongside 1 x 180glh AAQ equivalent to an AS Level to make up a 2 year study programme equivalent to 3 A Levels in total.	
<b>Note:</b> It's important to research the specific entry requirements for Higher Education programmes at different universities or institutions, as these requirements can vary. Some programmes may have prerequisites or recommended subjects, so it is advised that learners check the admission criteria of the institutions they're interested in. Additionally, learners could also consider seeking guidance from school counselors or career advisors to ensure their A-level and AAQ choices align with their career goals.	

Each mixed study programme option is equivalent to 3 A Levels

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Healthcare Science - Mixed study programme examples	
To progress to higher education in healthcare science in the UK, it's essential to choose the right A-level and AAQ subjects that will provide you with a strong foundation in relevant areas. Healthcare science is a broad field with various specialties, so your specific A-level and AAQ choices may depend on your area of interest within healthcare science. However, here are some general examples of A-level and AAQ subjects that can be beneficial for study in a mixed study programme.	
<b>Option 1</b>	
A Level	Physics
A Level	Mathematics
Small AAQ	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner may study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2, whilst studying the Diploma AAQ over 2 years. The other option is to study all 3 subjects over a 2 year period.	
<b>Option 2</b>	
A Level	Physics
A Level	Mathematics
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period, whilst studying the Certificate AAQ in year 1 and then the Diploma in year 2.	
<b>Option 3</b>	
A Level	Physics
A Level	Mathematics
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	180glh Certificate in Human Biology
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period. Alongside this, the learner has the option to select 2 x 180glh AAQs (equivalent to A/S Levels) whereby they will typically study one in year 1 and the other in year 2.	
<b>Option 4</b>	
A Level	Physics
A Level	Mathematics
A/S Level	Biology
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 2.5 A Levels across a typical 2 year study programme alongside 1 x 180glh AAQ equivalent to an AS Level to make up a 2 year study programme equivalent to 3 A Levels in total.	
<b>Note:</b> It's important to research the specific entry requirements for Higher Education programmes at different universities or institutions, as these requirements can vary. Some programmes may have prerequisites or recommended subjects, so it is advised that learners check the admission criteria of the institutions they're interested in. Additionally, learners could also consider seeking guidance from school counselors or career advisors to ensure their A-level and AAQ choices align with their career goals.	

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Health & Care Management - Mixed study programme examples	
To pursue higher education in Health and Care Management in the UK, it's important to select A-level subjects that will prepare you for this field and provide a strong foundation in relevant areas. Health and Care Management involves aspects of healthcare administration, leadership, and management. Here are some A-level and AAQ subjects that can be beneficial for study in a mixed study programme:	
Option 1	
A Level	Business Studies
A Level	Economics
Small AAQ	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner may study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2, whilst studying the Diploma AAQ over 2 years. The other option is to study all 3 subjects over a 2 year period.	
Option 2	
A Level	Business Studies
A Level	Economics
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	360glh Diploma in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period, whilst studying the Certificate AAQ in year 1 and then the Diploma in year 2.	
Option 3	
A Level	Business Studies
A Level	Economics
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
	180glh Certificate in Financial Studies
In this option, the learner has options to study 1 A Level in year 1 and the other in year 2 or to study both A Levels over a 2 year period. Alongside this, the learner has the option to select 2 x 180glh AAQs (equivalent to A/S Levels) whereby they will typically study one in year 1 and the other in year 2.	
Option 4	
A Level	Business Studies
A Level	Economics
A/S Level	Sociology
Small AAQ	180glh Certificate in Health & Social Care
In this option, the learner has options to study 2.5 A Levels across a typical 2 year study programme alongside 1 x 180glh AAQ equivalent to an AS Level to make up a 2 year study programme equivalent to 3 A Levels in total.	
<b>Note:</b> It's important to research the specific entry requirements for Higher Education programmes at different universities or institutions, as these requirements can vary. Some programmes may have prerequisites or recommended subjects, so it is advised that learners check the admission criteria of the institutions they're interested in. Additionally, learners could also consider seeking guidance from school counselors or career advisors to ensure their A-level and AAQ choices align with their career goals.	

Each mixed study programme option is equivalent to 3 A Levels