

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMAS

YOUR GUIDE



Hello

Welcome to our guide about the Access to Higher Education Diplomas we offer here at Exeter College.

Access courses can help people without traditional qualifications, or those who have been out of education for some time, prepare for university. They are specifically designed to help you progress confidently on to professional advanced training. Our students often tell us they love the way the courses fit around their current lifestyle.

Exeter College has been running the nationally recognised Access to Higher Education programme since 1987. We hope you decide to join this successful programme and look forward to welcoming you soon.

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What is an Access Diploma?

The Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma is a qualification which prepares students for study at degree level. If you would like to go to university but left school without the qualifications you need, or you are thinking of a career change, then an Access to HE course could be for you.

The Access to HE Diploma is widely recognised by UK universities, and many actively encourage applications from Access to HE students.

Did you know?

Each year, around 20,000 Access to HE students apply for a degree course at a UK university. They go on to study a wide and diverse range of subjects.

Why study an Access course?

As well as developing your knowledge in your chosen subject area, you will also be developing essential skills to prepare you for university level study.

- Study skills - reading, note taking, essay writing, research skills, reference writing, revision strategies, exam practice, presentation skills, group work, seminars and discussions.
- Academic skills - analysis, evaluation, discussion, clear explanation and description.
- Confidence in independent study and time management.



Progression and careers

Studying for just one year with us can massively change your prospects and set you on the path to success.

Here is a sample of just some of the potential study/careers routes you could take after studying an Access Diploma with us.

Access Diplomas currently available:

Art and Design

Textile and Fashion Design, Ceramics, Photography, Graphic Design, Fine Art and Illustration.

Business

Accountancy, Leadership and Management, Business Administration or Business Studies.

Health Professions

Occupational Therapy, Nursing (including Adult, Mental Health and Child Nursing), Physiotherapy, Midwifery, Optometry, Dental Hygiene, Medical Imaging, Speech and Language Therapy, Nutrition, Podiatry, Health and Exercise Science, Neuroscience, Evolutionary Biology or Paramedic Science.

Humanities

History, Archaeology, Politics, Teaching, English, Creative Writing, Journalism, Criminology, International Relations, Liberal Arts, Film, Law or Geography.

Science (Biology and Chemistry)

Dental Hygiene, Medicine, Radiography, Veterinary Science, Chemical Engineering, Forensic Science or Chemical Research.

Science (Physics and Maths)

Meteorology, Clinical Imaging, Aeronautical/Astrophysical Engineering, Actuary or Data Analytics.

Social Science

Teaching, Psychology, Law, Research, Policing, Linguistics, Criminology, Crime and Security Science, Clinical Psychology, Sociology, International Relations, Psychology with Criminology, Occupational Therapy, Politics, Anthropology, Religion and Theology and Social Work.

Many of our learners progress on to Higher Education. Scan here to hear one of our learner's stories:



Destinations

Our Access students progress to prestigious universities across the country in a wide range of subjects. The map below shows where graduates from the 2023/24 academic year continued their studies.

- Arts University Plymouth
- University of Bath
- Bath Spa University
- Bournemouth University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- Durham University
- University of East London
- University of Essex
- University of Exeter
- Exeter College
- University of Herefordshire
- Keele University
- Kings College London
- University of Leeds
- University of Manchester
- Norland College
- University of Nottingham
- University of Plymouth
- University of Reading
- University of the Arts London
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- University of the West of England
- York St John



What you need to know

The Diploma course is an intensive one year programme, designed to ensure students have the best chance of successfully completing the course.

We are looking for applicants with the following qualities:

- A high level of motivation to be an independent student with a willingness for self study.
- The commitment to studying a full time, challenging course.
- GCSE English and Maths at grade C or above*.
- GCSE Science at grade C or above (for Science and Health Professions Diplomas).
- Evidence of recent study is desirable.
- A clear idea of the university level programme that you wish to apply for.

**Please note, from 2017 a grade C in English and Maths equivalent is a grade 4(C)*

Courses start in September and run for 36 weeks. The College has an expectation of a minimum **95% attendance** in order for students to achieve their full potential.

You will usually spend up to **3 days per week in College** - lessons are timetabled between the hours of **9am and 4.30pm**, depending on the Diploma.

These courses will require a minimum of **20 hours** independent study at home per week and a total of 12-14 hours of teaching.

Study will be a combination of lectures, small group work, practical exercises, group discussions, seminars and tutorials. You will collect evidence of your work and present it in a portfolio.

Students may also be enrolled on a supplementary IT course, at no extra cost. Essential Digital Skills has been designed to enhance and polish IT skills for use in the real world and is vital for university and future careers.

Please note – this is a full time qualification that will require serious commitment. It is intended only for people with a clear plan to progress on to a specific course at university level. You will need the time and capacity to commit to full time study.

Example timetable (Access to Health Professions):

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-------------|------------|------------|--|--|--|
| 9.00-10.30 | No lessons | No lessons | Psychology core subject (Behaviourism Level 3 Graded Unit) | Health Studies core subject (Health Promotion Level 3 Graded Unit) | Biology core subject (Cell Biology and Biochemistry Level 3 Graded Unit) |
| 10.30-10.45 | | | Break time | Break time | Break time |
| 10.45-12.00 | | | Psychology core subject (Behaviourism Level 3 Graded Unit) | Psychology core subject (Behaviourism Level 3 Graded Unit) | Study period |
| 12.00-13.00 | | | Lunchtime | Study skills (IT for academic study) | Biology core subject (Cell Biology and Biochemistry Level 3 Graded Unit) |
| 13.00-14.00 | | | Study skills with personal tutor | Study skills (IT for academic study) | Biology core subject (Cell Biology and Biochemistry Level 3 Graded Unit) |
| 14.00-15.00 | | | 1:1 tutorial | No lessons | Biology core subject (Cell Biology and Biochemistry Level 3 Graded Unit) |
| 15.00-16.00 | | | 1:1 tutorial | No lessons | No lessons |

How to apply

- 1 Visit the website to apply online at **apply.exe-coll.ac.uk**. For further advice from our Adult Advice Team please call **01392 400170** or email **adultadvice@exe-coll.ac.uk**.
- 2 You will be invited to attend a one to one interview with a course tutor where you will have the opportunity to find out more about your chosen course. It will also be a chance for our tutors to find out more about you and your previous skills and knowledge. You will also need to provide evidence of your qualifications – lost certificates can be applied for by contacting schools or exam boards. Please be aware that there is a cost to this.

Extra support

All students that disclose a specific learning need at the application stage will be invited to a **learning support interview**. Our specialist learning support team will assess your needs and discuss how we can support you throughout your course. We can offer a range of services including **1:1 study skills support, dyslexia support, and support with applying for exam access** arrangements and **in class support**.

Finance and Advanced Learner Loans

Fees for Access to Higher Education courses are dependent on your circumstances and chosen course and are subject to review on an annual basis. Please check our website for up to date information.

Fees for 2025/26

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Art and Design | £3928 |
| Business | £3022 |
| Health Professions | £3384 |
| Humanities | £3022 |
| Science (Biology and Chemistry) | £3384 |
| Science (Physics and Maths) | £3384 |
| Social Science | £3022 |

Funding guidance

Level 3 Entitlement

If you are currently aged 19-23 and don't hold a full Level 3 qualification (see below for what qualifies as a full Level 3) you could do any Access course for free.

- 4 AS Levels or more
- 2 A Levels or more
- National Diploma or higher
- City & Guilds Advanced Craft
- Access to HE Diploma
- HNC/HND
- 1st Degree/Higher Degree
- NVQ 3 or higher
- Advanced GNVQ
- ONC/OND
- RSA Diploma or higher
- GNVQ intermediate or higher
- TEC Cert/Diploma
- HE Cert/Diploma
- Nursing (SRN)
- LCCI Cert (2nd Level) or higher
- LCCI Advanced Level
- Pitmans Level 2 Int or higher
- ESOL/Foreign Lang Advanced
- TEC Cert/Diploma

Advanced Learner Loan (ALL)

If you are not eligible for Level 3 entitlement you can take out an Advanced Learner Loan to cover the Access course fee.

Eligibility for ALL. You will need to be:

- aged 19 and over at the start of the academic year (on 31st August 2025).
- living in the UK for the last 3 years
- a UK resident or hold Settled status within the UK.

When will I repay my loan?

- Loan repayments are linked to what you earn when you've finished your course, not how much you borrowed.
- You only need to start paying back your Advanced Learner Loan when you've finished your course and you're earning more than £27,295 a year. You pay back 9% of the money you earn over £27,295.

Did you know?

If you take out a loan for an Access to HE Diploma and progress to university level study, the Student

Loans Company will write off the balance of your first loan, once you complete your university level qualification.

Fee liability information:

We would advise that should you take out an Advanced Learner Loan and not complete your course, you are liable for any payments made by the loan company on your behalf to the College, up to the point of leaving. In addition, you will also be liable to pay any outstanding course costs to Exeter College. You would also lose your entitlement to one of your four loan opportunities. We are not able to advise on personal financial matters and recommend that you contact the Money Advice Service if you are considering applying for the Advanced Learner Loan: moneyadvice.service.org.uk

For more details about how you can cover the costs of your course with an Advanced Learner Loan, scan the QR code.



My tutor was so welcoming and she gave me so much encouragement and motivation. If you know what you want to do, what you want to achieve, that helps a lot in terms of your journey. Nothing is impossible, if you really want it, you can get there.

**Mahfuza, studied
Access to Higher
Education (Business)**



Bursary Fund

Some students are eligible for financial support for the costs that they might encounter as part of their studies. We may be able to help with travel costs, essential kit and equipment, books, trips and visits, accreditation or professional membership fees, and domestic/accommodation emergencies.

Scan here to find out your eligibility for bursary information, including information about eligibility and evidence required. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Bursary Advisers on: **bursary@exe-coll.ac.uk** or telephone: **01392 400526**



Childcare costs

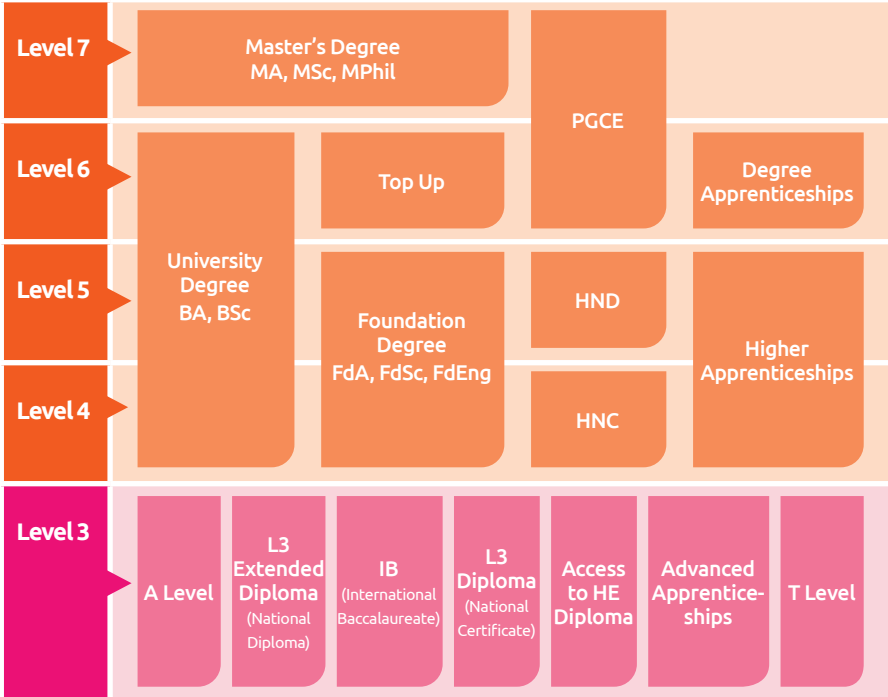
If you are aged under 20 please apply to the government's Care to Learn scheme (www.gov.uk/care-to-learn).

Nursing Bursary

If you are hoping to start your Access to Health Professions course in September 2025 with a view to progress on to nursing, the government may offer a bursary to support you with your studies. Visit gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners

Levels explained

We appreciate that there are numerous choices available when it comes to deciding the right path for you. We hope the simple guide below will help explain the different levels. If you need advice on which qualification is right for you, please don't hesitate to contact us.



Level 3 is the key to your university level education... these qualifications will help you to progress to achieve your career goals.

Requirements for Access Courses

If you feel that you are not quite ready for an Access course then we offer a range of courses to help you prepare for your Access Diploma.

GCSE English and Maths

For those who do not have a GCSE grade C or 4 or above in English and/or Maths, these courses are offered free of charge (providing you are a British Citizen or from the European Union).



It is essential that you complete these qualifications before applying for your Access to Higher Education Diploma.

GCSE Biology

A GCSE in Science is needed for both of our Access to HE Diplomas in Science as well as the Health Professions diploma. We offer this course on Tuesday evenings. See our website for further details.



Preparation for Access – Science

This course provides a refresher in science for those whose GCSE pass is over 5 years old. It is intended to supplement a previous GCSE for students wishing to progress to Access in Science (Biology and Chemistry) or Health Professions.

Art and Design

Exeter College provides the physical resources, teaching excellence and infrastructure needed to support you in your creative journey and your progression to Higher Education. We offer a good proportion of direct contact time with lecturers and high levels of tutorial support and guidance in dynamic and stimulating learning environments with subject specific studios. This Diploma offers a broad based understanding of art and design and a grounding in a range of skills both traditional and digital.

Units within this course are:

- Ceramics – Working with Clay
- Colour Theory and Application
- Contextual Studies in Art and Design
- Final Major Project – Artefact and Exhibition
- Graphic Design
- History of Art and Design
- Observed Drawing
- Perspective Drawing
- Photography Skills
- Portfolio and Progression
- Preparing an Exhibition in Art and Design
- Textiles
- Working with 3D Media

Study Skills

- Academic Study Techniques
- Presentation Skills
- Producing a Written Assignment
- Progressing to Higher Education

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- Art History – 9 graded credits
- Practical units in different disciplines using a range of media - 18 graded credits
- Drawing – 6 graded credits
- Portfolio, final major project and exhibiting - 12 graded credits
- Study Skills – 15 credits (ungraded)

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English. (* see page 6)

Please note that some universities will require a GCSE in Maths.

Progression routes

Past students have gone on to work in or study various subjects, including: Animation, Photography, Textile Design, Graphic Design, Fine Art, Illustration, Architecture, Conservation, Fashion and Games Design.

Business

This Diploma is ideal if you want a career in business and need to gain the qualifications to get into university. The course is delivered in the new Digital and Data Centre, located in the city centre. Complete with digital learning laboratories, state-of-the-art IT suites and interactive seminar spaces, learners have access to cutting edge equipment to help prepare them for their next steps. The Diploma thrives on the links and interaction with the local business community.

Units within this course are:

- Business and the Economy
- Business Accounting
- Innovation and Creativity in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- Human Resources
- Marketing Tools
- Planning and Promoting an Event
- Statistics
- The Law of Tort Negligence
- Workplace Organisations

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- Business – 30 graded credits
- Sociology – 3 graded credits
- Law – 3 graded credits
- Mathematics – 3 graded credits
- Workplace – 3 graded credits (please note this does not indicate the need to attend a work placement)
- Introductory Academic (3), Study Skills (12) – 15 credits total (ungraded)

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English and GCSE Maths.
(* see page 6)

Progression routes

Business Administration, Business Studies, Leadership and Management and industry specific management degrees. You will be able to pursue jobs in Retail, Finance, Management, Hospitality, and Education. You could also progress on to study Business at a higher level at Exeter College.



I didn't have a good experience at school and didn't gain the qualifications I needed, so studying as a mature student both for my GCSEs and then Access has been perfect for me. Access has grown me both academically and personally. It has pushed me in the right way. It's been a fresh start for me in education and everyone is really supportive and they have seen my potential.

**Sherry, studied
Access to Higher
Education (Health
Professions)**

Health Professions

Within our Access to Higher Education Health Professions Diploma, you will develop your knowledge around the human body and many aspects of psychology. This Diploma can be a great pathway to a career in nursing and other NHS Allied courses. Our dedicated staff deliver a course that yields a high success rate which is amongst the highest in the South West.

Units within this course are:

Introductory Academic, Study Skills and IT

- Academic Study Techniques
- Numeracy in a Health Context
- Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions
- Word Processing

Human Biology

- Human Cell Biology
- Homeostasis and the Endocrine System
- Nutrition and Digestion
- Respiration and Circulation

- The Human Muscular and Skeletal System
- The Nervous System
- The Urinary System

Health Studies

- A Medical Condition

Psychology

- Behaviourism
- Psychopathology
- Treatments and Therapies
- Understanding Stress
- Memory Processes

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- Biology – 21 graded credits
- Psychology – 21 graded credits
- Health Studies – 3 graded credits
- Study Skills – 15 credits

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English, GCSE Maths and any Science grade 4(C) or above. (* see page 6)

Progression routes

Past students have gone on to work in or study various subjects including: Children's Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Adult Nursing, Optometry, Dental Hygiene, Mental Health Nursing, Midwifery, Medical Imaging, Speech and Language Therapy, Nutrition, Podiatry, Health and Exercise Science, Neuroscience, Evolutionary Biology and Paramedic Science.

Nursing Bursary

If you are hoping to start your Access to Health Professional course with a view to progress on to nursing, the government may offer a bursary to support you with your studies. Visit gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners for the latest information.



Humanities

Humanities subjects give you the chance to analyse and understand the world around you. Whether you choose to study physical features of the landscape, the impact of globalisation on our culture and economy, or how events of the past have shaped our present, you will complete your studies with high-level skills of enquiry and analysis that are prized by universities and employers.

Units within this course are:

English

- Appreciating Literature
- Appreciation of a Novel
- Language Change
- Shakespearean Drama
- Fairy Tales, Folklore and Culture

History

- Origins of the First World War
- Causes of Revolution in Russia
- Dictatorship in the Twentieth Century
- The Holocaust

- History Project
- Causes and Consequences in History

Introductory Academic and Study Skills

- Introductory Academic - Introduction to Literature
- Producing a Written Assignment
- Presentation Skills
- Academic Study Techniques

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- English – 21 graded credits
- History – 18 graded credits
- Politics – 6 graded credits
- Introductory Academic (3) and Study Skills (12) – 15 credits total (ungraded)

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English and GCSE Maths. (* see page 6)

Progression routes

You could go on to work or study various subjects, including: History, Archaeology, Politics, English, Creative Writing, Criminology, Geography, Journalism, International Relations, Liberal Arts, Film, Law and Teaching.

Science (Biology and Chemistry)*



Science
Technology
Engineering
Maths

Want to be able to progress to a degree course in mathematics, physics or engineering? Students are highly successful on our courses due to experienced staff and their ability to develop your knowledge and enquiring mind through interesting units and research opportunities.

Units within this course are:

Study Skills and IT

- Academic Study Techniques
- Word Processing

Biology

- Human Cell Biology
- Biochemistry
- Respiration and Circulation
- Photosynthesis
- Genetics
- Introduction to Ecology

Chemistry

- Introduction to Chemistry
- Acids and Bases
- Alcohols, Amines and Carboxylic Acids
- Periodic Table
- Physical Chemistry

Practical Scientific Project Mathematics

- Statistical Analysis
- Exponentials and Logarithms

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- Biology - 15 graded credits
- Chemistry - 18 graded credits
- Maths - 6 graded credits
- Practical Scientific Project - 6 graded credits
- Introductory academic (6), IT (3) and Study Skills (6) – 15 credits total (ungraded)

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.


What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above in GCSE English, GCSE Maths and any Science grade 4(C) or above (see page 6). We also offer a 'Preparation for Access to Higher Education - Science' course (see page 12).

Progression routes

Past students have gone on to work in or study various subjects, including: Conservation Biology, Environmental Science, Computer Science, Biosciences, Dietetics, Forensic Science, Radiography, Medical Science, Paramedic Science and Veterinary Science. You could also progress on to study Coaching and Fitness or Sports Therapy at Exeter College.

***Please note:** this course does not cater for progression into Maths based higher education courses such as Engineering, Architecture and Physics.

A young man with a beard and short brown hair, wearing a black hoodie with 'MMA TRAINING' on it, stands with his arms crossed in front of a modern building with large glass windows. A teal speech bubble is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text about his education. The background is slightly blurred, showing the building's structure and some greenery.

I am now studying Medicine at the University of Exeter. I studied the Access to Higher Education Biology and Chemistry Diploma which was perfect for me – it gave me the qualifications I needed to move on to university and everyone was really helpful and supportive.

**Harry, former
Access student**

Science (Physics and Maths)



This Diploma introduces you to a wide range of subjects, including Science, Engineering, Design, Environment, Mathematics, Computing and IT to prepare you for a wide range of qualifications.

Units within this course are:

Study Skills

- Academic Study Techniques

Physics

- Waves
- Electricity
- Mechanics
- Radioactivity
- Astrophysics

Mathematics

- Advanced Mathematics 1
- Advanced Mathematics 2
- Calculus

Practical Scientific Project Introductory Academic

- Statics, Forces and Newton's Law of Motion
- Mathematics - Number

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:

- Physics - 24 graded credits
- Mathematics - 15 graded credits
- Practical Scientific Project - 6 graded credits
- Introductory academic (6), IT (3) and Study Skills (6) – 15 credits total (ungraded)

Visit exe-coll.ac.uk/Access for further credit breakdown information.

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English, GCSE Maths and any Science grade 4(C) or above. (* see page 6)

Progression routes

You could continue study or start a career in subjects such as Meteorology, Clinical Imaging, Aeronautical/Astrophysical Engineering, Actuary or Data Analytics. Or you could enrol on a Computing HNC or Engineering degree at Exeter College.

Social Science

Studying Social Science provides you with a wide range of transferable skills. Due to the varied nature of the subject, you could go on to further study in subjects such as Teaching, Law, Sociology or Psychology. The options are plentiful, but these subjects are unified by one thing - a focus on understanding the workings of human society.

Units within this course are:

Psychology

- Behaviourism
- Pro-Social and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Psychopathology
- Treatments and Therapies
- Memory Processes
- Understanding Stress

Sociology

- Sociology of Education
- Understanding Crime and Deviance

- Measurements of Crime
- Sex and Gender Studies
- Sociology of Religion

Introductory Academic and Study Skills

- Sociological Theory: An Introduction
- Academic Study Techniques
- Producing a Written Assignment
- Presentation Skills

Please note these are subject to change.

Credit breakdown overview for this Diploma:


- Psychology – 24 graded credits
- Sociology – 21 graded credits
- Introductory Academic (3) and Study Skills (12) – 15 credits (ungraded)

What are the entry requirements?

You will need a grade 4(C) or above* in GCSE English and GCSE Maths.
(* see page 6)

Progression routes

Past students have gone on to work or study in: Teaching, Psychology, Law, Research, Policing, Linguistics, Criminology, Crime and Security Science, Clinical Psychology, Sociology, International Relations, Psychology with Criminology, Occupational Therapy, Politics, Anthropology, Religion and Theology and Social Work.



The support that you get at College is enough to make you feel like you can do anything. I think Access opens up doors and it's a great qualification. Coming back into education and being that little bit older I know what it is that I need in terms of support, and College have been amazing with it.

Meg, studied Access to Higher Education (Social Sciences)

Contact us

If you have any questions about studying with us then please get in touch, we will always be happy to talk it through.

For more information about **Access Diplomas**, **Advanced Learner Loans** or to find out more about our **Higher Education qualifications** please visit www.exe-coll.ac.uk or contact our Adult Advisers on **01392 400170** or email adultadvice@exe-coll.ac.uk

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Access to HE Centre of the Year
FINALIST