

# Access to Higher Education Diploma

## KEY STATISTICS 2016 - 2017



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All data is usually calculated excluding those "unknown" or "not declared" unless otherwise stated. Data is rounded up to a whole number or percentage.

## Introduction

The Access to Higher Education Diploma is a widely recognised qualification that provides a chance for adults to enter higher education, even if they have achieved few qualifications in the past. The Diplomas offer benefits, especially for disadvantaged groups, helping individuals to achieve their ambitions and giving them the chance to progress into study at degree level or prepare for the workplace.

The Diplomas are approved and awarded by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) who are regulated and licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

Every year, QAA collects and publishes data about the Diplomas and the students who study on them.

Open College Network West Midlands is an AVA licensed by QAA for its Access to Higher Education provision. We publish our data relating to the Access provision each year. This report<sup>1</sup> is a comparison between the national and AVA data for the year 2016/17. It continues to show that this provision promotes social mobility and transforms the lives of students, their families and their communities.

## Providers, Courses and Students

In 2016/17 41 organisations were providing Open College Network West Midlands Access to HE Diploma courses. QAA has 5 provider types with Further Education Colleges being the majority for both the QAA (80%) and the AVA (83%). As can be seen in Table 1, the AVA providers made up 12% of the total providers in the QAA data.

**Table 1 Providers offering Access to HE Diploma Courses by Type 2016/17**

| Provider Type               | QAA        | AVA       | % of QAA  |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| FE Colleges                 | 274        | 34        | 12        |
| HEIs                        | 9          | 0         | 0         |
| 6th Form Colleges           | 18         | 1         | 6         |
| Adult / Community Education | 18         | 2         | 11        |
| Other                       | 25         | 4         | 16        |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>344</b> | <b>41</b> | <b>12</b> |

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<sup>1</sup> Two QAA publications were used for this comparison: Access to Higher Education Key Statistics published 2018 and Access to Higher education: Diploma Courses and Students published 2018.

## Student Profile

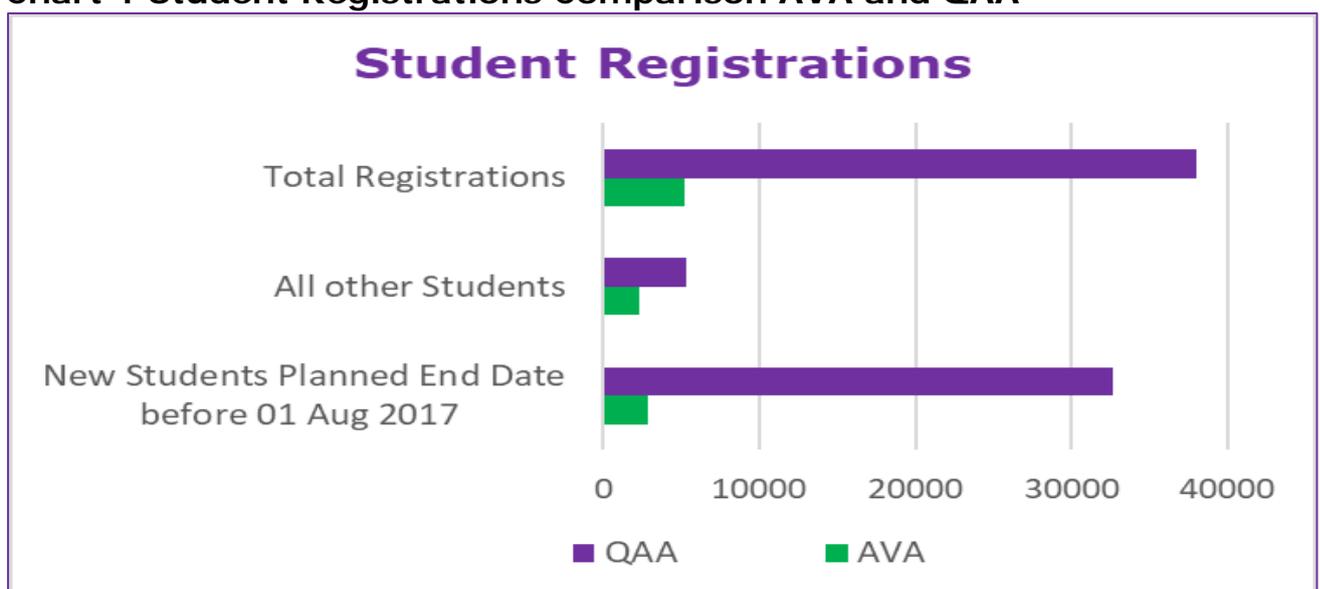
In England and Wales, **38,025** individuals were studying for an Access to HE Diploma in 2016/17 of which **5,185** were registered by this AVA (**14%**) making Open College Network West Midlands the second largest AVA.

Students are registered to one of four categories at the start of their course:

1. New Learner Planned End Date before 01 Aug 2017
2. New Learner Planned End Date after 01 Aug 2017
3. Re-Registered Learner Planned End Date before 01 Aug 2017
4. Re-Registered Learner Planned End Date after 01 Aug 2017

As can be seen from Chart 1, the majority of students nationally were registered to complete their studies in one year and finish by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 (86%). However, this is not the case with students who were registered to this AVA's provision. There was a more equal spread between those who would complete in a year (55%) and those who were registered to complete their studies after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017, many of whom would have been part-time students who would complete in two years or students who were registered later on in the 2016/17 academic year who would continue to study after the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017. In Chart 1 "All other Students" refers to all those students not expecting to complete before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 i.e. categories 2 and 4 above.

**Chart 1 Student Registrations Comparison AVA and QAA**



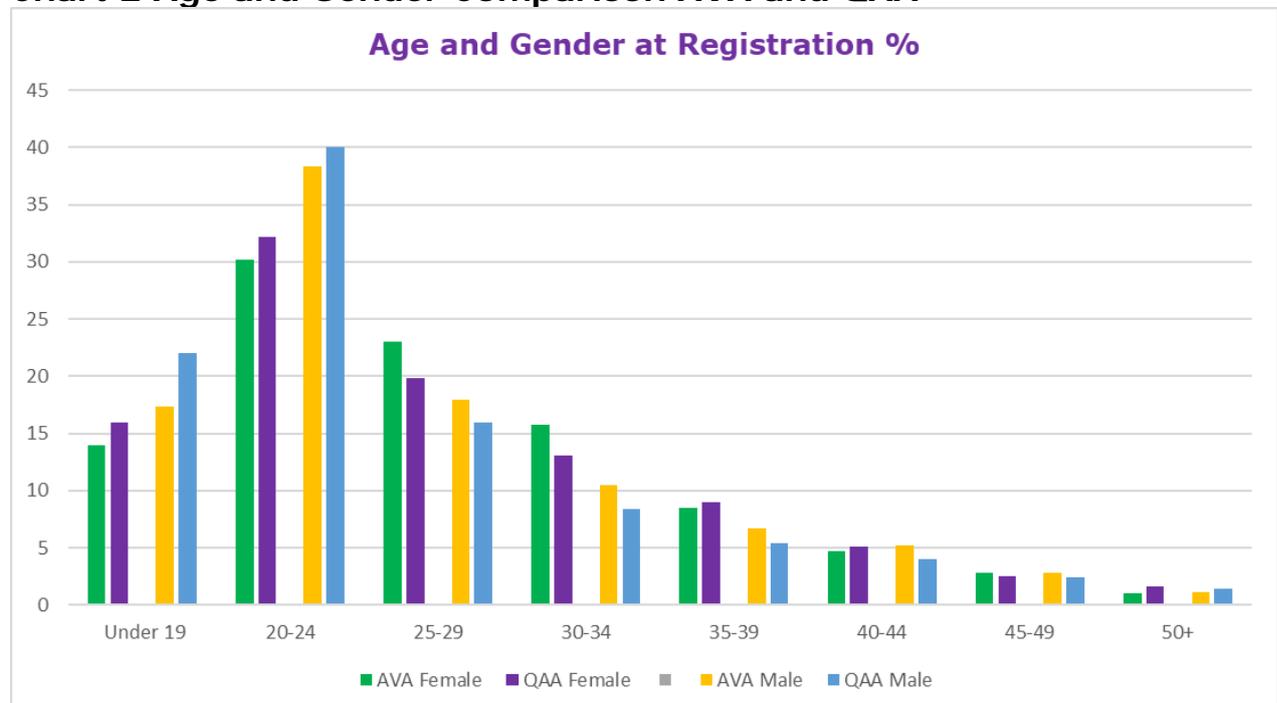
## Age and Gender

81% of students registered with the AVA were female which is 8% higher than the QAA national percentage of 73% female.

QAA have eight groupings for age starting with "Under 19" through to 50+. Many of these group percentages are similar for the AVA and QAA nationally particularly in the 40-44 years category. There is a notable difference as nationally, 52% of students are under 25 years compared with only 37% for the AVA. However, 84% of students registered with the AVA were aged 34 or under similar to the national percentage of 83%. The lowest percentage of student registrations was in the 50+ age group with 2% nationally and just 1% for the AVA.

The highest percentage of both males and females is in the 20-24 years age group with females at 30% (AVA) and 32% (QAA) and males at 38% (AVA) and 40% (QAA) of all students registered. Nationally, males aged 29 years and under make up 78% of all male students registered (73% for the AVA). The percentage of females aged 29 years and under is much lower than the males nationally (68%) which is similar to the AVA at 67%.

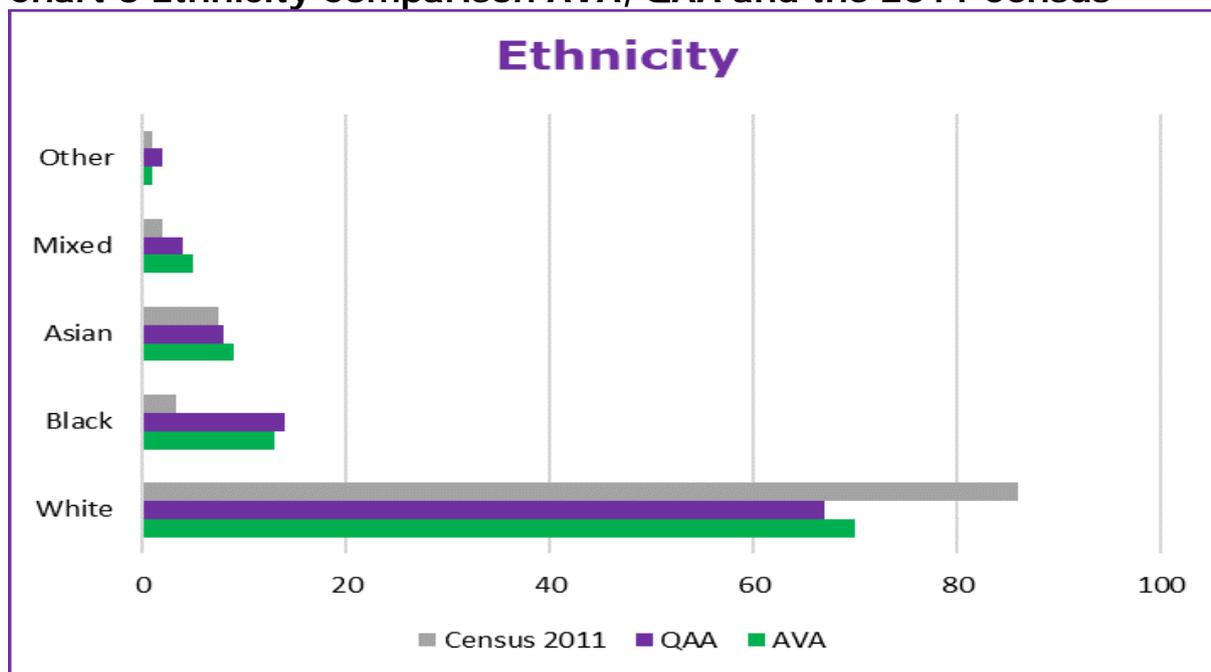
**Chart 2 Age and Gender Comparison AVA and QAA**



## Ethnicity

Access to HE provision helps to widen participation by attracting students from across ethnic backgrounds.

**Chart 3 Ethnicity Comparison AVA, QAA and the 2011 Census**



By comparing the AVA and QAA national percentages with the Census figures from 2011<sup>2</sup> for ethnicity, it is clear that a higher percentage of Access to HE students are drawn from minority ethnic groups than are in the general population as a whole. Whilst 67% of students identified themselves as “British”<sup>3</sup> for QAA nationally and 70% for the AVA, the census figure is 86%. The ethnic group with the greatest discrepancy with the census figures is the “Black” grouping which includes Black; African; Caribbean and Black British. In the census there are only 3.3% in this group whereas for the QAA nationally it is 14% of students registered and 13% for this AVA.

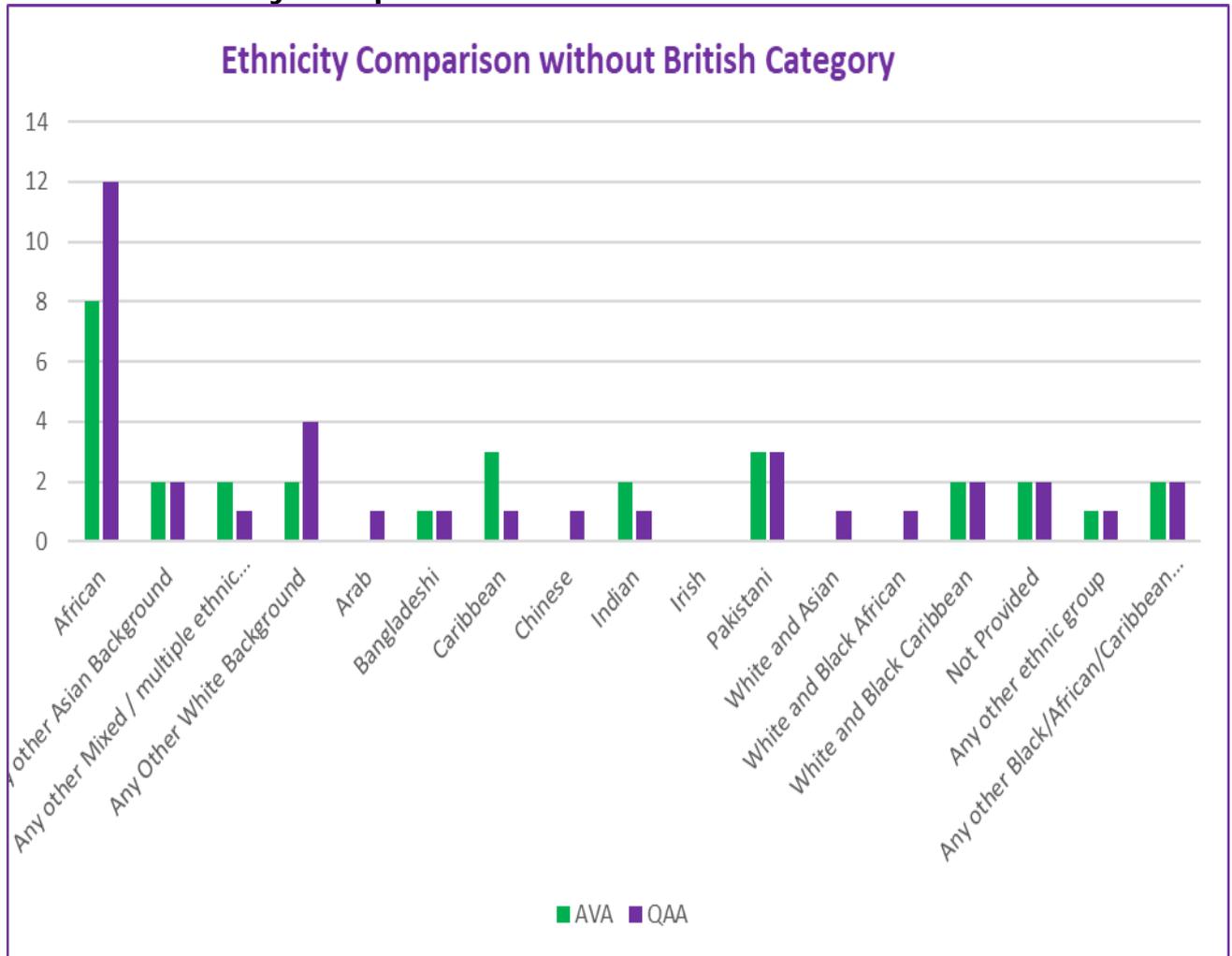
The comparison between the AVA and the QAA national percentages for most of the categories is similar except for the largest non “British” category “African” which is 33% higher than the AVA (8% / 12%) and “Any Other White Background” which is double the AVA percentage (2% / 4%) even though still low. Within the “African” category, both the AVA and QAA had 14% of all males registered but although 12% of females were within this category nationally there were only 7% with the AVA.

To enable a clearer comparison in Chart 4, the “British” category has been omitted. Where it appears that there have been no registrations within a category this is because these are less than 1% of registrations and therefore, show as zero.

<sup>2</sup> 2011 Census data is taken from the Office of National Statistics website [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> This term includes English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish /British.

**Chart 4 Ethnicity Comparison AVA and QAA**

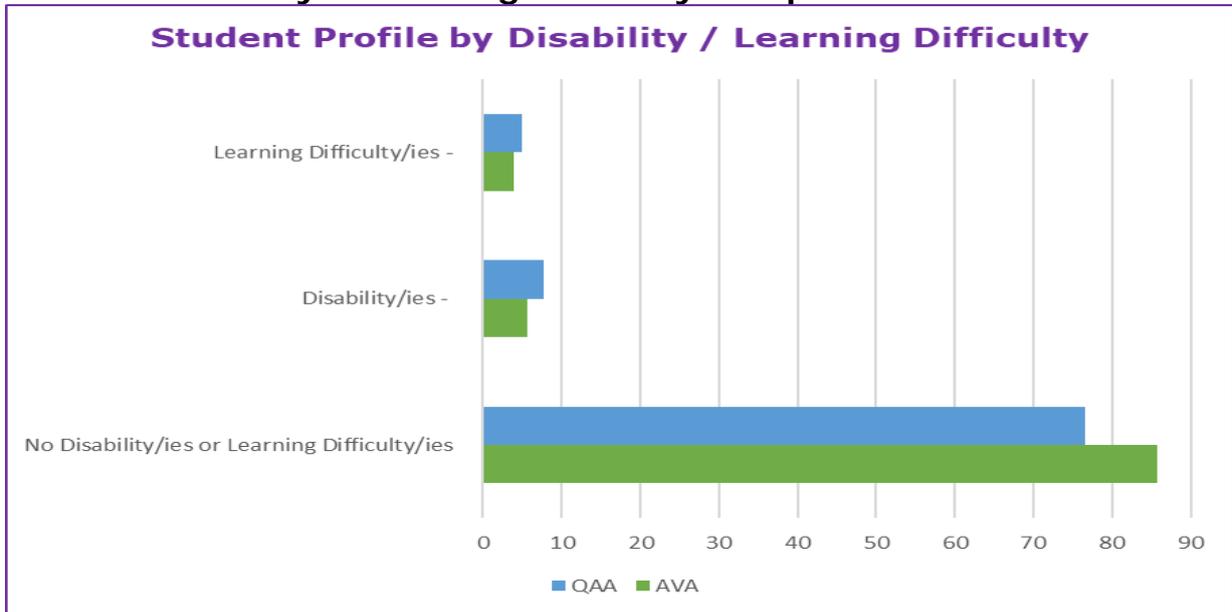


## Disadvantage and Disabilities / Difficulties

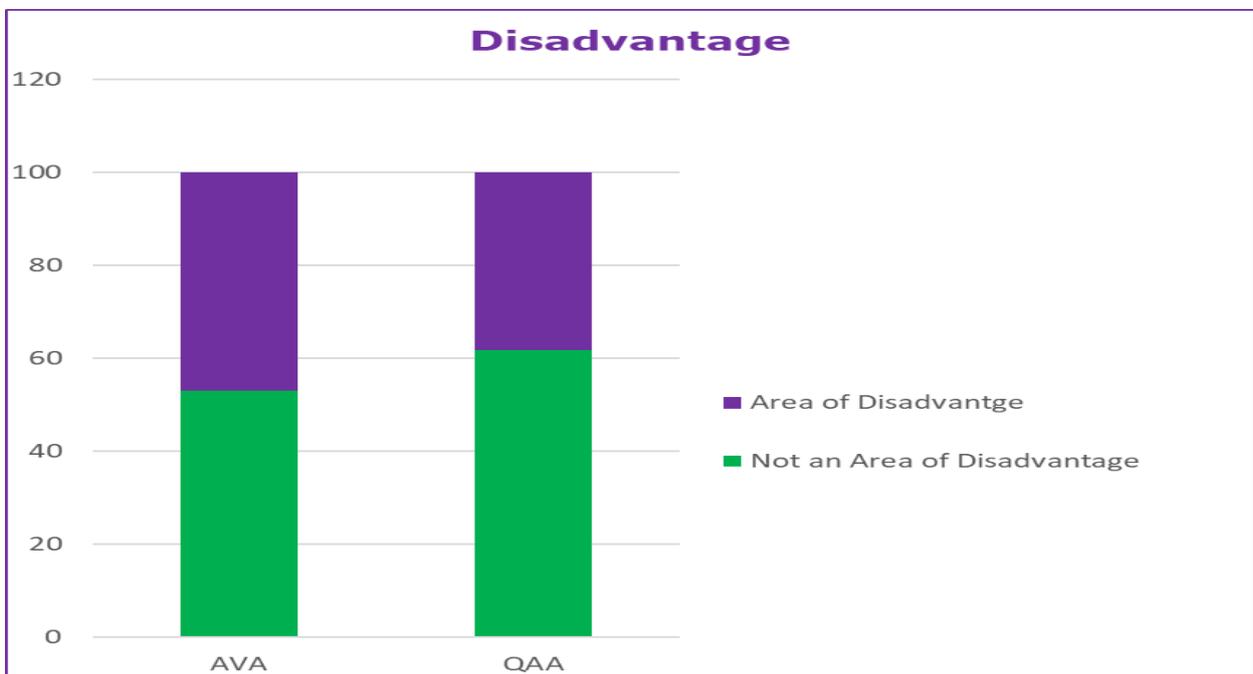
At registration students can identify against three categories for disabilities / learning difficulties. It is worth noting that this category tends to be under reported because many students are unaware, when they register, of any learning disabilities / difficulties they may have such as dyslexia or dyspraxia because of poor diagnosis in their prior educational setting.

The percentage of AVA students who registered with No Disability/ies or Learning Difficulty/ies was 10% higher than the QAA national figure (86% / 76%). It is difficult to understand why this might be the case without much more detailed analysis which is not possible. It could be that the identification of specific disabilities / difficulties is less well done in the centres which the AVA serves. However, those students who registered with either Disabilities (8% QAA / 6%) or Learning Difficulties (5% QAA / 4%) are roughly comparable as can be seen from Chart 5.

**Chart 5 Disability / Learning Difficulty Comparison QAA and AVA**



**Chart 6 Registrations from Areas of Disadvantage Comparison AVA and QAA**



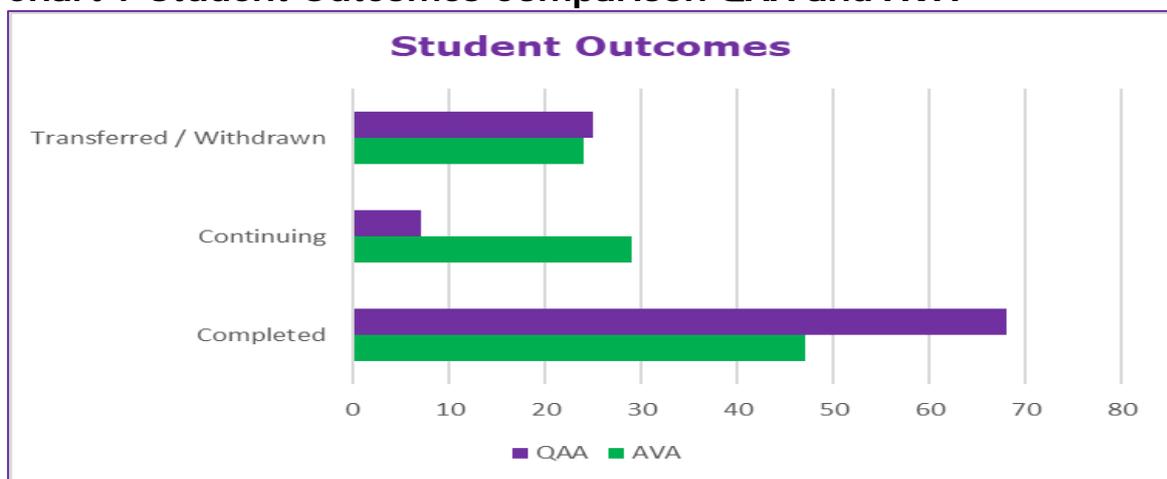
The percentage of students living in an area of disadvantage who registered with the AVA (47%) is 9% higher than the QAA national figure. As the AVA registrations are not solely from the West Midlands region, a

direct comparison with the census figures is difficult. However, there are significant areas of disadvantage within the West Midlands including around Birmingham and the Black Country as well as the north west (Stoke on Trent) and the rural areas of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

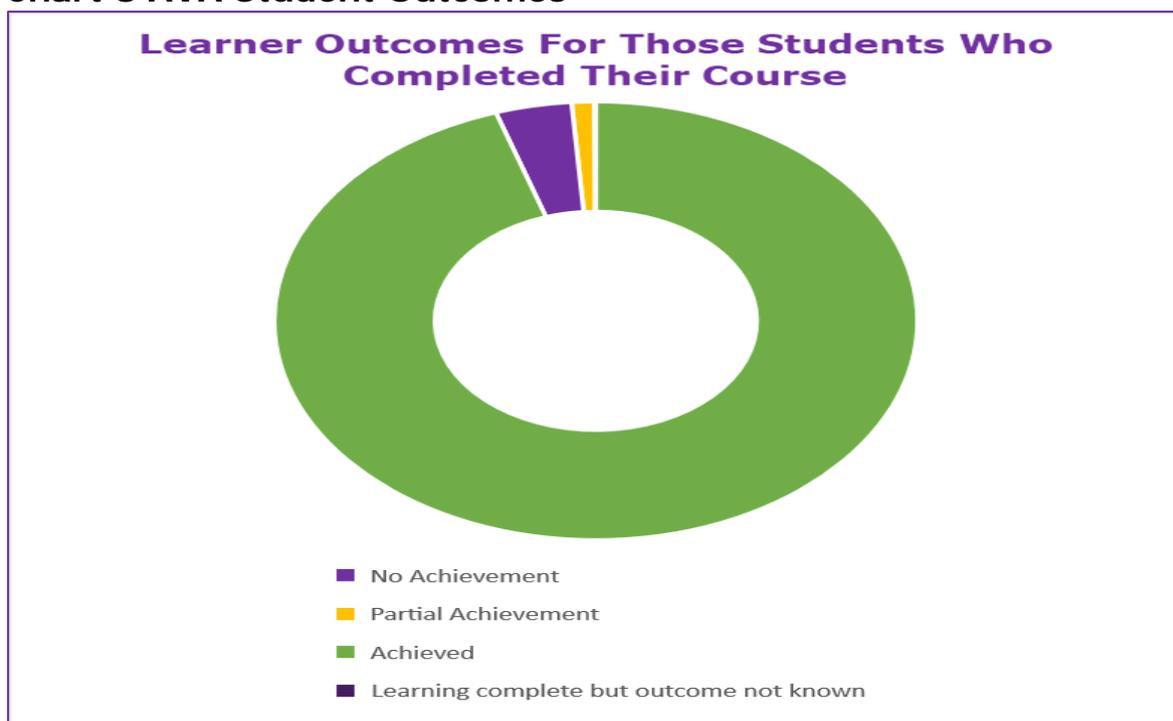
## Student Completion and Achievement

Nationally, 68% of all students registered completed in 2017 compared to only 47% for the AVA. However, this is explained by the fact that 29% of the students registered with the AVA planned to continue whereas only 7% nationally were planning to do so. As explained above, this AVA has a high proportion of part-time students and / or students registering throughout the year (largely for online provision) who would not have completed the course before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017. The withdrawal rates for the AVA (24%) and the QAA nationally (25%) are similar.

**Chart 7 Student Outcomes Comparison QAA and AVA**



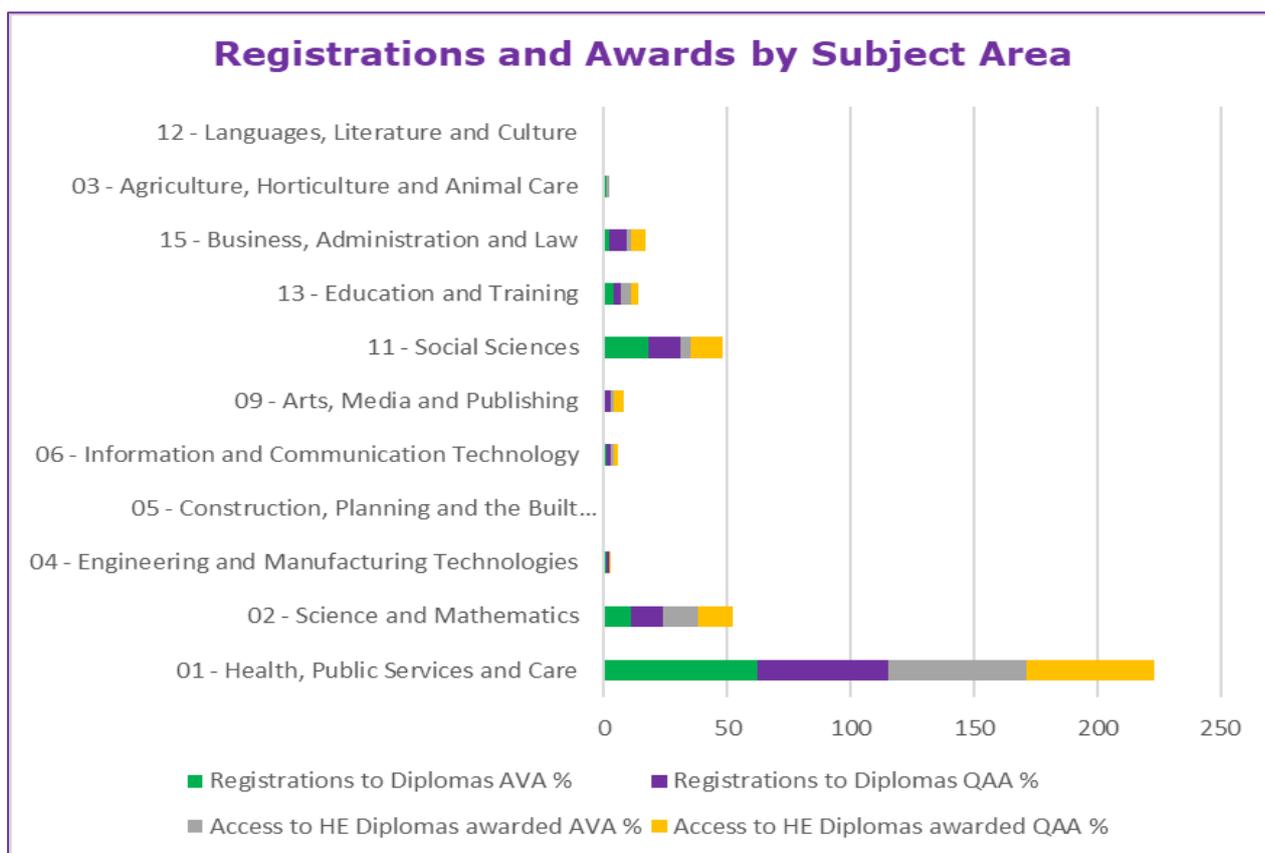
**Chart 8 AVA Student Outcomes**



Of those students who completed in 2017, 95% of the AVA students achieved an Access to HE Diploma compared to 92% nationally.

AVA students were registered and awarded against 11 Tier 1 Subject Areas. The largest Subject Area was 01 Health, Public Services and Care, followed by 11 Social Sciences and then 02 Science and Mathematics. The AVA registrations to Area 01 are 9% higher than the QAA national registrations, slightly lower (2%) for Area 02 and 5% higher for Area 03.

Achievement of the Diplomas for the AVA are 4% higher for Area 01 (56%), exactly the same for Area 02 (14%) but 9% lower for Area 03 (4% / 13%). Other areas have similar achievements except Subject Area 15 Business, Administration and Law where the QAA achievement is 4% higher. As above where it appears that there have been no registrations within a category this is because these are less than 1% of registrations and therefore, show as zero. This is true of Subject Area 05 Construction, Planning and the Built Environment where registrations with the AVA were only 11 and 60 nationally.



Access to HE provision is a long-established route originally developed as a collaboration between local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and FE Colleges in the 1980s. It enabled those with no qualifications and often a poor educational experience to go into Higher Education. The

qualification has changed significantly since then into the Diploma structure we have now. However, it continues to do exactly what the title of the Diplomas say, it provides access to HE, employment and further training.

The AVA would like to acknowledge all of the staff who deliver Access to HE provision in the many centres recognised by the AVA and in the wider setting. These are dedicated educationalists who really do transform lives. Congratulations to them all.