**The Association of Electoral Administrators**

AEA Qualifications

**Diploma in Electoral Administration**

Candidate Information Pack

**October 2023**

**Introduction**

We offer the UK’s only professional qualification in electoral administration. A sound career platform, it is regarded as essential for most electoral administrator posts.

Delivering personal development and professional benefits, we offer a progressive qualification route from Foundation Course to Certificate to Diploma.

Our qualification also offers advantages to employers through staff improvement and raises standards and professionalism across the UK electoral community.

**Qualification format and rules**

Our current qualification rules are available [on the qualifications page of our website](https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/training-qualifications/qualifications/).

Candidates must be AEA members when they register and remain so throughout the qualification process.

Candidates must normally complete the Diploma within two years of the appropriate annual registration date.

You may not apply to register for the Diploma unless you have previously been awarded the Certificate. There is no time limit between being awarded the Certificate and registering for the Diploma.

**Registration and fee**

The annual Diploma registration deadline is **1 October**. The application to register is available [on the qualifications page of our website](https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/training-qualifications/qualifications/).

The total fee is **£2,350**. This includes:

* initial registration
* the dissertation
* sitting of two examination papers.

The fee is subject to VAT. The full scale of fees is set out at Appendix B.

**Diploma induction course**

An online Diploma induction course will be held in October 2024 on Microsoft Teams.

We will send you further details once we confirm your registration. All candidates are strongly advised to attend the induction, but if you are unable to do so, course notes will be provided.

**Diploma syllabus**

The Diploma syllabus comprises three modules:

Module D1 Electoral Law: To provide an understanding and working knowledge of the law relating to the registration of electors, the conduct of elections and the establishment and review of electoral boundaries.

You will be expected to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the main principles of British electoral law and an ability to use that knowledge to provide sound working practices at a senior level and to offer advice to all those having an interest in such matters.

Module D2 Public Administration, Electoral Arrangements and Electoral Systems: To provide an appreciation and understanding of the major procedures and practices of local government and its relationship to the national political and administrative process; general and special electoral arrangements including matters relating to boundaries; and other electoral systems in common use in other democracies.

You will be expected to demonstrate a sound background knowledge of British local government and constitutional matters, a clear working understanding of matters relating to boundaries and other quasi electoral arrangements and be able to comment authoritatively on a variety of other electoral systems specified in the syllabus.

Module D3 Management and Finance: To provide an appreciation and understanding of the major principles employed in the effective management of organisations; how information systems can be used to achieve effective and efficient operation of the office environment; and specific financial and related considerations in the registration of electors and the conduct of elections.

You will be expected to demonstrate an ability to translate knowledge into practice in all fields of management covered in the syllabus and to be able to demonstrate a sound knowledge of financial matters relating to the work of a senior electoral administrator.

The current syllabus is available [on the qualifications page of our website](https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/training-qualifications/qualifications/).

**Dissertation**

You are required to complete a dissertation on a subject chosen from those set by our Examining Board or one of your own choice approved by the Board. You must submit your dissertation by 30 September following the registration date.

A sample of previous dissertation topics published by the Examining Board is provided for information at Appendix A.

An outline of your dissertation must be submitted by 31 January in accordance with Qualifications Board procedures. A dissertation outline that does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once within one month of the original notification.

Your dissertation must be between 7,000 and 10,000 words and submitted in accordance with Qualifications Board procedures. A dissertation which does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once within two months of the original notification.

A discussion linked to your dissertation will normally take place by 31 January or, in the event of a re-submission, by 1 March. If the discussion results in a failure, you may re-sit it once. The second discussion will take place within three months of the original notification.

The dissertation pass mark, to be validated at the discussion, is 45 marks.

**Written assessments**

Assessment days will be held in September each year.

The assessments will comprise of:

(a) A two and a half hour written examination consisting of six questions (three each from modules D1 and D2), of which four must be answered (two from each module). This session will start at 10.30am.

(b) A two hour written examination consisting of five questions from module D3, of which three must be answered. This session will start at 2.00pm.

Assessments are marked using a previously agreed marking scheme. The pass mark for the morning assessment is 45 marks (45%) and for the afternoon assessment is 34 marks (45%).

If you fail part of the assessment, you may re-sit the appropriate part(s) a maximum of two attempts.

**Award of Diploma**

Once you have reached the required standard for your dissertation, passed the discussion and achieved passes for both parts of the written assessment, you will be awarded the Diploma in Electoral Administration.

You will be entitled to use the designatory letters AEA (Dip) for as long as you remain an AEA member.

**Dissertation Topics**

Candidates are required to complete a dissertation on a subject to be chosen from those set by the Examining Board or, alternatively, one of their own choice approved by the Board. A dissertation outline must be submitted by 31 January and the dissertation submitted by 30 September.

Listed below are examples of subjects selected by the Board as suitable dissertation topics in recent years:

1. Is the current funding model for UK national elections and referendums fit for purpose? Consider the responsibilities of the Electoral Registration Officer, the Returning/Counting Officer, the local authority and Government and compare it to funding arrangements in other modern democracies. Suggest alternative approaches.
2. Absent voting enhances or endangers the democratic process?
3. Examine how the Electoral Commission has developed as an organisation since its inception and consider whether changes are required to its role, responsibilities and remit to best support the delivery of electoral systems across the UK.
4. Consider whether the devolution of certain electoral matters should be considered an opportunity or a risk to the delivery of safe and secure systems across the UK.

5. Is the media a threat or an opportunity? Explore this question in relation to the administration of elections from the perspective of voters, electoral administrators and candidates.

6. Is it time the House of Lords is abolished as a second "chamber" in Parliament? Consider the arguments from both sides and if abolition did not take place, what changes could be made to ensure that the will of elected representatives is not overridden by the Upper House.

7. Compare and contrast the methods of challenging an election in a UK Parliamentary constituency with challenging elections in two other countries. What recommendations would you make for change in the UK.

8. How secure is our electoral system from fraud? Consider how the current UK system has developed in comparison with at least one other mature democracy and another more recent democracy. Suggest any changes to our electoral system that may make the processes more robust.

**Diploma**

**Basic fee £2,350**

**Additional fees (as necessary)**

Dissertation re-submission £502.95

Examination re-sits (each paper) £408.03

Dissertation extension £93.83

Late application for registration £93.83

Appeal against failure £159.29

**Note: all fees are subject to VAT.**