

UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

APPENDIX 2

University Qualification and Level Descriptors

These descriptors are based on the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualification Descriptors (2014) and SEEC Level Descriptors for Further & Higher Education (2003) but modified to reflect the University's Mission and the professional/vocational nature of the programme portfolio.

Section A: Qualification Descriptors (Taught Programmes)

Section B1.2 of the Academic Regulations refers

Descriptor for a Qualification at NOF Level 3:

Qualifications at NOF Level 3 are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i a largely given conceptual knowledge base and a recognition of the breadth of the field of study and relevant terminology;
- ii an ability to apply the skills of manipulation of knowledge to make informed judgements within routine contexts and with guidance, work beyond defined contexts;

Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a apply established approaches to solving well defined problems and show emerging recognition of the complexity of associated issues;
- b within defined contexts and under guidance, consider personal and/or workplace experience and manage information/data from a range of sources appropriate to the field of study;
- c developing the ability to communicate outcomes effectively;

and will normally have:

- d qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and life requiring some self-directed activity, with broad guidance and evaluation, and responsibility for quality of output;
- e the ability needed to undertake further learning and development of new skills within a structured and managed environment;

Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education):

Qualifications at level 4 are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i knowledge of the underpinning concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate these within the context of that area of study;
- ii a range of subject specific, cognitive and transferable skills.

Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work;
- b communicate the outcomes of their study/work accurately and in a structured and clear manner;
- c identify and discuss the relationship between personal and/or work place experience and findings from a range of quality resources from the field of study;

And will normally have:

- d qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and life requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility;
- e the ability to undertake appropriate further learning of a professional or equivalent nature.

Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 5 (Foundation Degree):

Qualifications at level 5 are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study;
- ii ability to apply and evaluate key concepts and theories within and outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context;
- iii knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s), and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study;
- iv an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences their analysis and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a select and use a range of subject specific, cognitive and transferable skills; enabling problem solving strategies in the field of study and in the generation of ideas;
- b effectively communicate information and arguments in a variety of forms and apply key techniques of the discipline effectively;
- c reflect on personal and/or work place experience in the light of recent scholarship and current statutory regulations (where appropriate);

and will normally have:

- d qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and life requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility and decision-making and determining and achieving personal outcomes;
- e the ability to undertake appropriate further learning of a professional or equivalent nature.

Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 6 (Bachelor's degree with honours):

Qualifications at level 6 are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i a systematic and conceptual understanding of key aspects of their field of study including; acquisition of current and detailed knowledge, of their discipline;
- ii an ability to select and apply appropriate techniques of analysis and enquiry within their discipline;
- iii conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - critically engage in and comment upon particular aspects of current statutory regulations, research, contemporary issues, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline;
- iv an appreciation of complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity in their discipline(s) ;
- v the ability to manage their own learning and professional practice (as appropriate);

Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a critically review and evaluate concepts and evidence from a range of sources
- b apply transferable skills and problem solving strategies to a range of situations and to solve complex problems;
- c exercise personal judgement in a range of situations appropriate to their programme of study
- d communicate solutions, arguments and ideas clearly in a variety of forms;
- e critically reflect and analyse personal and/or work place experience in the light of recent scholarship and current statutory regulations;

and will normally have:

- f qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and life requiring;
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts; and

- the ability to undertake appropriate further learning of a professional or equivalent nature.

Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 7 (Master's degree):

Qualifications at M level are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is as, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- ii a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research, advanced scholarship and/or professional practice;
- iii innovative application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- iv conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to critically evaluate current research, advanced scholarship or professional practice in the discipline or field of study; and
 - to evaluate methodologies, develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new approaches.

Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a employ advanced subject-specific and cognitive skills to enable decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations;
- b analyse complex concepts and professional situations by means of a synthesis of personal and/or work place reflection
- c continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;
- d accept accountability for decision making including the use of supervision;

and will have:

- e the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and life requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

University level descriptors (Levels 3 – 7)

Section C 3.12 of the Academic Regulations refers.

The higher education qualification descriptors set out below are intended as a guide to staff and students on the expected outcomes that students will achieve at each level of study as they progress through their programmes. Individual disciplines will also refer to subject benchmarks in determining the appropriate descriptors for individual modules and programmes.

At Level 3: (Year 0 undergraduate), students will be able to recognise the breadth of the field of study and apply the skills of manipulation of knowledge to make informed judgements within routine contexts and with guidance, begin to work beyond defined contexts; apply established approaches to solving well defined problems, showing emerging recognition of the complexity of associated issues and communicate outcomes effectively in an appropriate format; within a defined context and under guidance evaluate personal and/or workplace experience and manage information/ data from a range of sources appropriate to the field of study.

At Level 4: (Year 1 undergraduate), students will be able to demonstrate that they have the ability: to apply a systematic approach to the acquisition of knowledge, underpinning concepts and principles; use a range of subject specific, cognitive and transferable skills; evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving well defined problems and communicate outcomes in a structured and clear manner; identify and discuss the relationship between personal and/or work place experience and findings from appropriate sources drawn from the field of study.

At Level 5: (Year 2 undergraduate), students will be able to demonstrate that they have the ability: to apply & evaluate key concepts and theories within and outside the context in which they were first studied; select appropriately from and use a range of subject-specific, cognitive & transferable skills & problem solving strategies to problems in the field of study; effectively communicate information and arguments in a variety of forms;; reflect on personal and work place experience in the light of recent scholarship and current statutory regulations.

At Level 6: (Year 3 undergraduate), students will be able to demonstrate that they have the ability: to; critically review and evaluate concepts & evidence from a range of resources; transfer and apply subject-specific, cognitive and transferable skills and problem solving strategies to a range of situations and to solve complex problems; communicate solutions, arguments and ideas clearly and in a variety of forms; exercise judgement in a range of situations;; critically reflect and analyse personal and/or work place experience in the light of recent scholarship and current statutory regulations.

At Level 7 (Master's level), students will be able to demonstrate that they have a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is as, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice; employ advanced subject-specific and cognitive skills to enable decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; generate new ideas and support the achievement of desired outcomes; accept accountability for decision making including the use of supervision; analyse complex concepts and professional situations by means of synthesis of personal and/or work place reflection and data drawn from scholarship and research in the field.