

## UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

### APPENDIX 2

#### University Qualification and Level Descriptors

Descriptors for Levels 4-7 are taken from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

#### **Descriptor for a Qualification at NQF Level 3:**

*Qualifications at NQF 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.

**Holders of qualifications at this level** 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.

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

*Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:*

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study
- an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

*Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment.

*And holders will have:*

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

**Holders of a Certificate of Higher Education** will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

### **Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 5 (Foundation Degree, Diploma of Higher Education, Higher National Diploma):**

*Foundation degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:*

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context
- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

*Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations

*And holders will have:*

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making

**Holders of qualifications at this level** will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, for example HNDs, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

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

*Bachelors' degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:*

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
  - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

*Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences

*And holders will have:*

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts – the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

**Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours** will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.

**Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours** should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

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

*Masters' degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:*

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the 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
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

*Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

*And holders will have:*

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

Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees is at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline.

Successful students show originality in the application of knowledge, and they understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They are able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they show originality in tackling and solving problems. They have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.