

University Generic Grade Descriptors

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Generic qualification/level descriptors	1
3	Generic classification descriptors	2
4	Generic grade descriptors	2
5	How to use the grade descriptors	3
	Level 4 Grade Descriptors	5
	Level 5 Grade Descriptors	8
	Level 6 Grade Descriptors	11
	Level 7 Grade Descriptors	15
	Annexe A: 4 The Qualification Descriptors	18
	Annexe B: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6	285

1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the University of Worcester approach to generic level and grade descriptors for application to undergraduate and postgraduate taught course assessment. It is derived from the descriptors within [The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(FHEQ\)](#), and the [Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 \(annexe D\)](#), published by the QAA in 2019. The latter are reproduced in full as the Level 6 grade descriptors, and form the reference point for Level 4, 5 and 7 grade descriptors, set out below.

1.2 This document replaces the University Undergraduate Grade Descriptors (Levels 4 – 6) and the University Postgraduate Grade Descriptors (Level 7).

2 Generic qualification/level descriptors

2.1 The generic level descriptors provide a guide to the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and degree of learner autonomy expected of a learner at different stages of study or for exit qualifications, irrespective of the subject and context. The University has adopted the FHEQ qualification descriptors as the basis for level descriptors. These express the minimum expectations necessary for awarding level related qualifications (eg Cert HE, DipHE, Foundation Degree, Honours Degree, Masters etc). As generic statements they can be applied across subjects and modes of learning. They must inform the learning outcomes for the relevant awards at the specified level and set expectations for curriculum and assessment design.

2.2 The qualification descriptors can be found at Annexe A.

2.3 In summary there is an expectation as students move through the levels, that their work will demonstrate the following features:

- a. Increasingly sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the discipline from basic concepts and principles at Level 4 to critiquing of advanced scholarship and research – much of which is at the forefront of the discipline at Level 7
- b. Increasing awareness and critical understanding of the methods and techniques of enquiry within the discipline and ability to apply these to design, plan, analyse and address increasingly complex problems at Level 7
- c. Cumulative skills to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity alongside independent autonomous learning ability to create and interpret knowledge and evidence within the discipline, demonstrating originality in the generation of new and personal knowledge from research/enquiry at Level 7
- d. Growing confidence and skills in critical analysis, evaluation and critical reflection from standard application of established principles at Level 4 to detailed and creative analysis and insight at Level 7
- e. Effective communication skills that increasingly take account of audience, mode, academic rigour and a range of perspectives or viewpoints to sustain scholarly, coherent and sustained personal arguments
- f. Development of a repertoire of disciplinary technical/specialist/creative/methodological skills and increasingly reflective, competent and sophisticated demonstration of key transferable skills
- g. Ability to demonstrate personal responsibility in relation to initiative, decision making and judgement in clearly structured and defined contexts at Level 4 to unstructured and unpredictable contexts at Level 7.

3 Generic classification descriptors

3.1 In line with sector expectations the University had adopted the Outcome classification descriptors for FHEQ Level 6, published by the QAA in 2019, which are reproduced in full (Annexe B of this document). The classification descriptors go beyond the 3rd class degree threshold (as established in the QAA qualification descriptor for Honours degrees), to express what all four classifications look like (1st, 2:1, 2:2, and 3rd). The descriptions for each classification are intended to be sufficiently generic in order to be able to sit alongside course-specific learning outcomes which, combined, detail the complexity of understanding and skills that students must achieve to gain a degree and respective classification.

3.2 The descriptors can be found at Annexe B.

4 Generic grade descriptors

4.1 Generic grade descriptors define, for each level, the standards of performance expected across the marking scale. They are aligned with the generic level descriptors identified above. The descriptors define common characteristics expected

of work at each of the different marking bands, at each level of study. They take as a reference point the Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6, to present a summary of key characteristics of graded work at the relevant level.

4.2 The detailed descriptors set out below specify the general characteristics for each of the pass grades (A – D) and for two of the fail grades (F and G).

4.3 There are a number of fail grades (see 8.1 of the TCRF for the full listing). Grades E, F, G and H reflect judgements on work submitted that does not meet the threshold for a pass grade to a greater or lesser degree. It is important that the correct fail grade is awarded and that fail grades are moderated to ensure consistency.

University of Worcester Fail grades (TCRF 8.1)			
E	7	Fail	Borderline Fail - some engagement and understanding, but overall does not quite meet criteria for task
F	5	Fail	Fail – limited engagement and understanding, and overall weak response to task
G	2	Fail	Fail – very limited engagement and understanding, and overall poor response to task
H	0	Fail	Fail – seriously inadequate or insufficient response to task
NS	0	Fail	Fail – Non-submission

4.4 Students who submit an assessment item and the attempt is marked as 0 with a grade of H, NS, L2, SM, AM or RR, will fail the module overall, regardless of any apparent aggregated pass grade generated for the module overall.

5 How to use the grade descriptors

5.1 The generic grade descriptors are intended as a reference point for staff in designing assessment strategies and particularly in specifying assessment criteria and what is required in relation to the achievement of different grades in student assessments. They are not intended for student use in relation to assessments.

5.2 Since the descriptors are intended to be relevant across academic disciplines and professional training courses the descriptors relate to a wide range of skills and capabilities. Some of these will be more relevant to specific courses and modules, and others less so – this is a matter of academic judgement. Staff using the descriptors to set assessment criteria will refer to the appropriate level and select skill and capability areas that are most relevant to the assignment, customising descriptors for the specific assignment.

5.3 The grade descriptors signpost student achievement generically – they are not exhaustive. They are expressed in positive terms about the characteristics of student learning demonstrated to achieve a particular grade. They are designed as a reference point for the calibration of outcome standards and should be ‘translated’ into the course, module or assessment context for greater detail and specificity. Thus, they should be viewed alongside the specific statements of intended learning outcomes for a course or a module.

5.4 The descriptors are useful for:

- drafting specific assessment criteria and grade descriptors for assignments
- writing learning outcomes for course and module approval
- planning assessment strategies, especially at course level
- standardisation exercises to ensure members of a course team are all marking to comparable standards at the relevant level.

Approval/Review Table

Item	Notes
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Recent changes

Committee	Date	Change
Academic Board	July 2022	Grade Descriptors updated to include details of technical proficiency in English language, for Levels 4-7. Explanation added to note why grade E is not included in the descriptor tables.
LTSEC	June 2023	Updated to reflect changes in TCRF – 4.4 and 4.5 removed and replaced with new 4.4 and amended 4.3

NB (update July 2022)

For Grade Descriptors Levels 4-7

Grade E: there is no detailed descriptor for grade E, defined on the TCRF as *Borderline Fail - some engagement and understanding, but overall does not quite meet criteria for task*. It is a matter for markers and moderators to decide whether this grade, rather than a clear fail grade, best fits the student work, depending on the nature of the task and specific assessment criteria against which it is assessed.

Level 4 Grade Descriptors (updated July 2022)

L4	A	B	C	D	F	G
Relationship to assessment criteria	Exceptional response to all the assessment criteria for the task	Strong response to most of the assessment criteria for the task	Good response to most of the assessment criteria for the task	Adequate response to main assessment criteria for the task	Weak response to main assessment criteria for the task	Very poor response to main assessment criteria for the task
Knowledge and understanding	Excellent knowledge and understanding of terminology, principles, theories, and concepts of discipline, showing independent insight	Knowledge and understanding demonstrates thorough learning of terminology, theories, principles and concepts of discipline	Knowledge and understanding demonstrates sound learning of terminology, theories, facts and concepts of discipline	Knowledge and understanding sufficient to demonstrate learning of terminology, theories, facts and concepts of discipline	Weak or insufficient knowledge and understanding to demonstrate effective learning	Very poor knowledge and understanding to demonstrate effective learning
Evidence of independent study and relevant academic sources	Goes well beyond what is taught in reading/researching and use of academic sources and references to inform independent insight and understanding	Evidence of good judgement in selection and use of relevant academic sources/ references to go beyond what is taught	Evidence of sound use of taught content and engagement with standard academic reading/references	Relies on limited selection of taught content, set materials/standard readings and references	Very limited evidence of study from taught content and/or relevant academic sources and references	Very little evidence of study from taught content and/or relevant academic sources and references
Application of conceptual understanding	Evidence of strong conceptual understanding applied to analytical evaluation and interpretation of issues/problems/ data	Evidence of thorough conceptual understanding applied to the evaluation and interpretation of issues/problems/ data	Evidence of sound application of conceptual understanding and some evaluation to interpret issues/problems/data	Evidence of some ability to apply conceptual understanding to issues/problems/ data but limited evidence of evaluation or interpretation	Limited ability to apply conceptual understanding to evaluate and interpret issues/problems/data	Very weak conceptual understanding and little or no evidence of application, evaluation or interpretation

L4	A	B	C	D	F	G
Communication skills	Excellent communication/ presentation skills demonstrating clarity, and coherence that is well judged through high standards of written English/ spelling, punctuation and grammar used accurately to ensure ideas are communicated effectively	Very good communication/ presentation skills demonstrating clarity and coherence through very good standards of written English/ spelling, punctuation and grammar used accurately to ensure ideas are communicated effectively	Good clear communication/ presentation perhaps with some minor weaknesses through good standards of written English/ spelling, punctuation and grammar used accurately to ensure ideas are communicated effectively	Competent communication/ presentation with some weaknesses through competent standards of written English/ spelling, punctuation and grammar used accurately to ensure ideas are communicated effectively	Communication of information is inaccurate, incomplete or otherwise problematic in conveying understanding. Errors in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impede understanding of content	Very poor communication indicating incoherence and/or seriously incomplete understanding. Many errors in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impede understanding of content
Quality of argument	Evidence of a sustained, logical and well-substantiated argument, through good synthesis of materials and insightful analysis	Evidence of a logical, well-substantiated argument, through good synthesis of materials and thoughtful interpretation	Evidence of a logically constructed coherent argument, with supporting evidence but possible minor weaknesses	Evidence of a logically structured argument with supporting evidence, but with some weaknesses	Argument/ explanation is weak and poorly constructed, and/or unsubstantiated	Very poor argument/ explanation, lacking in logic and/or unsubstantiated
Relevant technical/creative/transferable skills development	Excellent demonstration of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in problem-solving	Very strong demonstration of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in problem-solving	Sound demonstration of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in structured predictable contexts	Adequate demonstration of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in structured predictable contexts	Weak evidence of relevant skills development or application	Seriously lacking in evidence of skills development or application

Level 5 Grade Descriptors (updated July 2022)

L5	A	B	C	D	F	G
Relationship to assessment criteria	Exceptional response to the assessment criteria for the task	Strong response to most of the assessment criteria for the task	Good response to most of the assessment criteria for the task	Adequate response to main assessment criteria for the task	Weak response to main assessment criteria for the task	Very poor response to main assessment criteria for the task
Knowledge and understanding	Exceptional breadth and depth of knowledge together with very strong clear independent critically evaluative understanding	Knowledge demonstrates thorough depth and breadth of learning together with independent critically evaluative understanding	Knowledge demonstrates good depth and breadth of learning together with emerging independent critically evaluative understanding	Knowledge sufficient to demonstrate sound learning with some standard critically evaluative understanding	Weak or insufficient knowledge and understanding to demonstrate effective learning	Very poor knowledge and understanding indicating ineffective learning
Evidence of independent study and relevant academic sources	Goes well beyond what is taught in reading/researching to inform learning	Evidence of insight in selection and use of material to go beyond what is taught	Good breadth of understanding of taught content and set reading/ references	Relies on adequate selection of set materials/standard readings and references	Limited evidence of use of set materials/relevant academic sources and references	Very little evidence of set materials/ relevant academic sources and references
Application of disciplinary analysis	Authoritative grasp of disciplinary concepts and analysis to issues and problems	Ability to relate facts/disciplinary concepts together and apply good disciplinary analysis to issues and problems	Responses are relevant to subject matter and show evidence of disciplinary analysis albeit with some limitations	Responses are relevant to subject matter but balanced to descriptive and derivative rather than disciplinary analysis	Little evidence of ability to apply disciplinary conceptual understanding	Very limited disciplinary conceptual understanding evidenced

L5	A	B	C	D	F	G
Communication skills	Excellent communication/presentation skills, appropriate to audience, and demonstrating clarity and judgement in conveying understanding and meaning through accurate written English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Very good communication/presentation skills, appropriate to audience to convey meaning, demonstrating strong competence, clarity and judgement, using accurate written English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Communication/presentation of information/evidence to convey understanding and meaning demonstrates competence, accuracy in written English/spelling, punctuation and grammar, and clarity.	Competent accurate communication/presentation of information/evidence to convey understanding, possibly with some weaknesses, including written English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Communication is inaccurate, incomplete or otherwise problematic in conveying understanding. Very poor communication indicating incoherence and/or seriously incomplete understanding. Inaccuracy in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impedes understanding of content	Very poor communication indicating incoherence and/or seriously incomplete understanding. Many inaccuracies in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impedes understanding of content
Quality of argument	Significant ability to construct and sustain evidence-based arguments, through excellent synthesis and critical interpretation of scholarly reviews and/or primary evidence	Arguments logically constructed, coherent and evidence-based on synthesis of scholarly review of a range of academic sources and critical insight	Logically constructed coherent argument, using scholarly review of academic sources, with some insight but possible weaknesses in structure/evidence	Logically structured coherent argument with supporting evidence, using scholarly review of academic sources, but with some weaknesses/gaps	Argument/explanation is weak and poorly constructed, and/or unsubstantiated	Very poor argument/explanation, lacking in logic and/or unsubstantiated

L5	A	B	C	D	F	G
Relevant technical/creative/transferable skills development	Exceptional demonstration of relevant technical/creative/transferable skills in managing and developing own learning and making decisions in complex contexts	Very good demonstration of relevant technical/creative/transferable skills in managing and developing own learning and making decisions in relatively complex contexts	Sound demonstration of relevant technical/creative/transferable skills outside of areas in which first studied	Adequate demonstration of application of relevant technical/creative/transferable skills outside of areas in which first studied	Weak evidence of relevant skills development or application	Seriously lacking in evidence of skills development or application

Level 6 Grade Descriptors (updated July 2022)

See Annexe B

L6	A	B	C	D	F	G
Relationship to assessment criteria	Exceptional response to all the assessment criteria for the task	Very strong response to the assessment criteria for the task	Good thorough response to assessment criteria for the task	Sufficient response to assessment criteria for the task	Weak response to main assessment criteria for the task	Very poor response to main assessment criteria for the task
Knowledge and understanding	Exceptional systematic depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of principles/ conceptual and theoretical perspectives, with strong independent critical and evaluative analysis that goes significantly beyond what has been taught	Well developed breadth and depth of knowledge and critical understanding of key facts/issues/ concepts/principles and perspectives/ theories, showing clear independent critical/analytical understanding	Sound systematic depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of key facts/issues/ concepts/principles and perspectives/ theories including some critical/ analytical understanding	Adequate depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, dealing with key facts/concepts/ principles and perspectives/ theories	Limited knowledge and understanding with only basic grasp of key facts/ concepts/principles and perspectives/ theories	Very poor knowledge and understanding indicating insufficient grasp of disciplinary concepts/principles and perspectives/ theories
Evidence of independent study and relevant reading/research	Evidence of extensive critical appraisal of independent research and analysis of range of sources to develop outstanding critical evaluation and insight in response to task	Evidence of breadth and depth in critically appraised independent reading and research to inform thorough analysis and insight in response to task	Evidence of breadth and depth in independent reading and research in development of relevant critical insight in response to task	Evidence of some independent reading and research to inform development of a relevant response to task	Limited evidence of use of set materials/relevant academic sources and references	Very little evidence of use of set materials/relevant academic sources and references

L6	A	B	C	D	F	G
Application of disciplinary methods/skills for problem-solving	Well developed understanding of established disciplinary methods/skills, and well developed accomplished problem solving ability based on justified selection and very effective application of a range of methods, to make reasoned decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstance with a high degree of autonomy	Strong understanding of established disciplinary methods/skills, and able to solve complex problems selecting and justifying effective application of a range of appropriate methods, to make reasoned decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstance, with some autonomy	Good understanding of established disciplinary methods/skills and able to solve complex problems, selecting and applying a range of appropriate methods to make sound decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstance	Sound understanding of established disciplinary methods/skills and able to solve problems, selecting appropriate methods to make sound decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstance	Evidence of ability to apply disciplinary conceptual understanding is lacking or confused	Seriously limited disciplinary or conceptual understanding evidenced
Application of research skills and understanding	Very convincing presentation of research in clear and engaging format appropriate for audience, and wide range of complex data collected/ processed/ interpreted efficiently and effectively	Thorough and perceptive presentation of research in format appropriate to audience and complex data collection/ processing/ interpretation is efficient and effective	Research presented clearly and effectively in appropriate format for audience and data collection/ processing/ interpretation is efficient and effective	Research presented clearly and effectively in appropriate format, perhaps with some minor errors, and data collection/ processing/ interpretation is effective	Research findings and explanations are flawed and/or unclear indicating inadequate grasp of disciplinary techniques of enquiry	Very limited evidence of sound research design, or analysis, with consequent significant inadequacies in presentation of findings and explanations

L6	A	B	C	D	F	G
Communication skills	Accomplished communication style and expression of ideas, information, analysis and argument to a high level with accurate use of English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Very proficient communication of ideas, information, problems, and analysis with clear, coherent and fluent style in selected format with accurate use of English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Confident effective communication of ideas, information, problems etc with clear, coherent and appropriate style verbally, electronically, visually and/or in writing with accurate use of English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Communicates ideas effectively and conveys meaning with clarity and appropriate style verbally, electronically, visually and/or in writing with mostly accurate use of English/spelling, punctuation and grammar	Communication is inaccurate, incomplete or otherwise problematic in conveying understanding. Very poor communication indicating incoherence and/or seriously incomplete understanding. Errors in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impede understanding of content	Very poor communication indicating incoherence and/or seriously incomplete understanding. Many errors in English/spelling, punctuation and grammar which impede understanding of content

L6	A	B	C	D	F	G
Quality of argument	Exceptionally constructed and substantiated argument, clearly explaining and synthesising complex ideas/ viewpoints/ information/ evidence to put together an outstanding analysis with well developed reasoned judgement	Sophisticated effective and logical argument with supporting evidence and strong reasoning, to clearly explain complex matters/ ideas and reach a convincing judgement	Effectively devised and logically sustained argument with supporting evidence, to clearly explain complex ideas/viewpoints to reach a reasoned judgement	Competently devised and sustained argument to explain complex matters perhaps with some minor weaknesses, eg in structure, coherence or currency, but generally sound if standard judgement	Argument is confused/simplistic and poorly constructed, with limited supporting analysis	Very poor argument, lacking in logic and/or unsubstantiated
Relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills development	Exceptional demonstration of application of relevant technical/ practical/creative/ transferable skills in new contexts, as well as managing learning using personal initiative and ability to critically reflect independently on own work	Very good demonstration of application of relevant technical/ practical/ creative/ transferable skills outside of areas in which first studied, and strong ability to systematically manage, initiate and critically reflect on own work	Sound demonstration of application of relevant technical/ practical/creative/ transferable skills outside of areas in which first studied, together with good ability to systematically manage, take responsibility for, and reflect on own work	Adequate demonstration of application of relevant technical/ practical/ creative/ transferable skills outside of areas in which first studied, together with appropriate ability to manage, take responsibility for, and reflect on own work	Weak evidence of application of relevant skills and/or limited ability to take responsibility for and reflect on own work	Seriously lacking in ability to apply relevant skills and/or little evidence of ability to manage own learning

Level 7 Grade Descriptors

Communication skills At Level 7, students are expected to demonstrate effective communication skills in line with the purpose of the assignment. Proficiency in English language, including spelling, punctuation and grammar should mostly be accurate throughout, and writing should always be clear and literate.

L7	A	B	C	D	F	G
Relationship to assessment criteria	Exceptional response to all the assessment criteria for the task	Very strong response to the assessment criteria for the task	Good thorough response to assessment criteria for the task	Sufficient response to assessment criteria for the task	Weak response to main assessment criteria for the task	Very poor response to main assessment criteria for the task
Advanced knowledge and understanding	Exceptional systematic mastery of advanced knowledge, principles and concepts in area of study, together with very strong independent critical and evaluative understanding of current issues and insight at the forefront of the discipline	Highly developed systematic advanced knowledge and critical understanding of area of study, including independent critical awareness of current issues and insights at the forefront of the discipline	Good systematic advanced knowledge and understanding of area of study including awareness of current issues and insights at the forefront of the discipline	Adequate sound advanced knowledge and understanding of the area of study, some of which is informed by developments at the forefront of the discipline	Limited advanced knowledge and understanding of area of study	Very limited advanced knowledge and understanding of area of study
Critical analysis	Goes well beyond what is taught in insightful, advanced study/research, to develop original critical analysis and evaluation that shows exceptional initiative and an authoritative independent grasp of issues	Evidence of systematic breadth and depth of critically appraised and insightful advanced study/research to develop independent original critical analysis and evaluation	Evidence of systematic breadth and depth of independent engagement with advanced study and research to develop relevant critical analysis to inform good response to task	Evidence of independent engagement with advanced research and study to inform satisfactory response to task, but limited in range and depth of critical analysis	Insufficient evidence of independent engagement with advanced research and study and/or of relevant current academic references	Significantly inadequate evidence of independent engagement with advanced research and study

L7	A	B	C	D	F	G
Understanding of techniques of enquiry	Exceptional ability in accomplished and innovative application of comprehensive critical and practical understanding of techniques of enquiry to provide original solutions to complex problems in the field of study	Well-developed competent critical and practical self-directed application of techniques of enquiry to provide original solutions to complex problems in the field of study	Comprehensive critical and practical understanding of techniques of enquiry and independent application to research/advanced scholarship in field of study	Comprehensive critical and practical understanding of techniques of enquiry and application to research/advanced scholarship in field of study	Evidence of critical and practical understanding of techniques of enquiry for area of study has significant gaps or flaws resulting in limited ability to critique advanced scholarship in field	Evidence of critical and practical understanding of techniques of enquiry for area of study is significantly lacking
Argument	Exceptional skills in constructing academic arguments and communicating complex ideas/ viewpoints/ information/ evidence to advance knowledge and understanding	Very well developed communication/ presentation of complex ideas/ viewpoints/ information/ evidence to sustain scholarly arguments that advance understanding	Effective logical and coherent communication/ presentation of complex ideas/ viewpoints/ information/ evidence to sustain informed arguments	Competent logical and coherent communication/ presentation of complex ideas/ viewpoints/ information/ evidence to sustain argument with some weaknesses, eg in structure, coherence or currency, but generally sound if standard judgement	Argument/ explanation is weak/poorly constructed, unsubstantiated or significantly lacking in coherence or validity	Little evidence of an independently constructed argument with appropriate supporting analysis or evidence

L7	A	B	C	D	F	G
Research	Research complex issues systematically and creatively, drawing on a mastery of analytical and specialist disciplinary skills, knowledge and understanding to make original contributions to scholarship in the field	Research complex issues systematically and creatively, drawing on thorough skills, knowledge and understanding to make independently sound, academically rigorous judgements in analysis and interpretation of outcomes	Research complex issues systematically and creatively and make sound academically rigorous judgements in analysis and interpretation of outcomes, albeit with minor limitations	Research complex issues systematically and creatively and make generally sound judgements in analysis and interpretation of outcomes, albeit with limitations	Research findings not presented effectively and research design/ application and/or interpretation of data is flawed, with little reflection or analysis of this	Significant inadequacies in research design or analysis, indicating limited understanding and/or ability to deal with complex issues or make sound judgements
Skills development	Exceptional demonstration at a professional level of competency in relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills to manage and develop own learning and make autonomous decisions in complex and unpredictable contexts	Capable and effective application at a professional level of command of relevant technical/creative/ transferable skills in managing and developing own learning and making autonomous decisions in complex and unpredictable contexts	Consistent and effective demonstration at a professional level of application of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in managing and developing own learning and making autonomous decisions	Effective demonstration at a professional level of application of relevant technical/ creative/ transferable skills in managing and developing own learning	Insufficient evidence of advanced skills development, lack of professional judgement and/or little or no demonstration of ability to manage own learning, take personal responsibility or initiative	Very limited evidence of advanced skills development, serious lack of professional judgement and inability to demonstrate self-direction

Annexe A: 4 The Qualification Descriptors

Extract from [The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(FHEQ\)](#)

4 The qualification descriptors

4.1 The UK frameworks for higher education qualifications use qualification descriptors (as does the QF-EHEA) to exemplify the general nature and outcomes of the main type of qualification at each framework level. The qualification descriptors are generic in nature and can be applied across subjects and modes of learning. They make clear how the qualification differs from other qualifications, both at that level and at other levels. They provide clear points of reference for each level and cover the great majority of existing qualifications.

4.2 An alternative approach, used by some other frameworks within the UK and Ireland, is to use level descriptors to describe the relative intellectual demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy associated with a particular level of learning and achievement. These set out a broader range of outcomes associated with a given level.

4.3 Qualification descriptors are in two parts. The first part¹⁸ is a statement of outcomes, achievement of which is assessed and which a student should be able to demonstrate for the award of the qualification. This is a statement of the national threshold academic standard for the qualification. This part is of particular relevance to degree-awarding bodies in designing, approving, assessing and reviewing academic programmes. They need to be satisfied that, for any programme, the learning opportunities and assessment provides every student with the opportunity to achieve, and to demonstrate achievement of, the intended programme learning outcomes (see paragraph 2.11). See Expectations A1, A3.1, A3.2, A3.3 and A3.4 of the Quality Code.

4.4 The second part of the descriptor is a statement of the wider abilities that a typical student would be expected to have developed. It assists higher education providers during discussions with employers, and others with an interest in the general capabilities of holders of the qualification.

4.5 Each qualification descriptor sets out the outcomes for the typical or main qualification type at each framework level. For levels 6, 7 and 8 of the FHEQ and SCQF levels 9, 10, 11 and 12 on the FQHEIS, this is a degree. Paragraphs 6.13-6.24 specify the titling conventions for qualifications at each level and specifically for the use of the title 'degree' for both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

4.6 At most levels there is more than one type of qualification that may be achieved (for example postgraduate diplomas and certificates in addition to master's degrees at level 7 on the FHEQ/SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS). Within each level, the various types of qualifications involve different volumes of learning (for example master's degrees entail more learning than postgraduate certificates). As a consequence of this there are differences in the range and nature of intended programme learning outcomes. Not all of the qualification types at each level therefore meet all of the expectations of the qualification descriptor. Where a qualification type other than the main qualification has a smaller volume of learning, the qualification descriptor for the degree is used as a reference point and the sub-degree qualification is expected to meet the descriptor in part. Paragraphs 4.10-4.18.6 provide further information about the qualification descriptor for each level of the framework. They explain which qualifications meet the descriptor in full, and where the qualification descriptor is used as a reference point for other qualifications at the same framework level.

4.7 Short programmes are often offered as continuing professional development opportunities. The qualification descriptors provide points of reference that help providers determine which level of the relevant UK framework should be assigned to any qualifications resulting from these programmes. The titling conventions of qualifications (paragraphs 6.13-6.23) are used to determine an appropriate title.

4.8 QAA keeps under review the need for any additional qualification descriptors, or amendment to them, in the light of the development of other points of reference, such as subject benchmark statements (see paragraphs 5.2-5.4) or European developments, for example arising from the Bologna Process.

4.9 The following paragraphs set out the qualification descriptors included in each of the two UK frameworks for higher education qualifications. At undergraduate levels, there are two separate descriptors for the Cert HE (one for the FHEQ and one for the FQHEIS), a qualification descriptor for the foundation degree on the FHEQ and a qualification descriptor for the DipHE on the FQHEIS, a qualification descriptor for the bachelor's non-honours degree in Scotland and two separate descriptors for bachelor's degrees with honours (one for the FHEQ and one for the FQHEIS). At postgraduate levels, there is a single qualification descriptor for FHEQ level 7/SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS and single descriptor for FHEQ level 8/SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS which the frameworks share. The qualification descriptors that relate to the FHEQ are tinted **green** and those that relate to the FQHEIS are tinted **blue**. Those qualification descriptors tinted **purple** are common to both the FHEQ and the FQHEIS.

¹⁸ The part of the descriptor that begins 'Qualifications xx are awarded to students who have demonstrated:'.

4.10 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 4 on the FHEQ: Certificate of Higher Education

The descriptor provided for this level is for any Certificate of Higher Education, which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications aligned with level 4 of the FHEQ.

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.

4.10.1 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. The Certificate of Higher Education may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

4.12 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 5 on the FHEQ: foundation degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any foundation degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 5 of the FHEQ, including Diplomas of Higher Education, Higher National Diplomas, etc.

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.

4.12.1 The foundation degree is an example of a qualification that meets, in full, the expectations of the qualification descriptor (and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*).¹⁹

4.12.2 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.

19 www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Foundation-degree-qualification-benchmark-2010.pdf

4.15 **Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6 on the FHEQ: bachelor's degree with honours**

The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 6 of the FHEQ, including bachelor's degrees, and graduate diplomas.

Bachelor's 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.

4.15.1 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.

4.15.2 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.

4.15.3 Bachelor's degrees with honours form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typically, learning outcomes for these programmes would be expected to be achieved on the basis of study equivalent to three or four full-time academic years and lead to qualifications with titles such as Bachelor of Arts, BA (Hons) or Bachelor of Science, BSc (Hons). In addition to bachelor's degrees at this level are short courses and professional 'conversion' courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline, leading to, for example, graduate certificates or graduate diplomas.

4.17 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS: master's degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any master's degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 7/ SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS, including postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

Master's 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.

4.17.1 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.

4.17.2 Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research or a mixture of both. Longer, research-based programmes may lead to the degree of MPhil. The learning outcomes of most master's degree courses are achieved on the basis of study equivalent to at least one full-time calendar year and are taken by graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours (or equivalent achievement).

4.173 Master's degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this framework level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development programmes and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master's degrees, in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas, typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.

4.174 Some master's degrees, for example, in science, engineering and mathematics, comprise an integrated programme of study spanning several levels. Such programmes typically involve study equivalent to at least four full-time academic years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and five in Scotland. Of this, study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year is at level 7 of the FHEQ/SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS and the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7/level 11 in full. Study at bachelor's level is integrated with study at master's level and the programmes are designed to meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 of the FHEQ/SCQF level 10 on the FQHEIS as well as those at level 7 of the FHEQ/level 11 of the FQHEIS. Such qualifications are often termed 'integrated master's' as an acknowledgement of the prior period of study at lower levels (which typically meets the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6/level 10).

4.175 First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science comprise an integrated programme of study and professional practice spanning several levels. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7/level 11, these qualifications may often retain, for historical reasons, titles of Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery, Bachelor of Dental Surgery, Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine or Bachelor of Veterinary Science, and are abbreviated to MBChB or BM BS, BDS, BVetMed and BVSc respectively. The use of the title 'Dr' by medical doctors is a historical abbreviation for the profession; it does not indicate a qualification at doctoral level (level 8 on the FHEQ/SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS).

4.176 In Scotland a small number of universities (Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews (the Scottish Ancients) have a long tradition of labelling certain undergraduate academic degrees as Master of Arts 'MA'. This title reflects historic Scottish custom and practice; there is no implication that the outcomes of the programmes are at SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS. These programmes are at SCQF level 9 or 10 on the FQHEIS.

4.177 The Master of Arts (MA) awards granted by the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge are not academic qualifications. The MA is normally granted, on application, to graduates of these universities with a bachelor's degree. No further study or assessment is required, but the recipient may be required to pay a fee. At the University of Oxford, the MA may be granted during or after the twenty-first term from matriculation, and at the University of Cambridge the MA may be granted six years after the end of the first term.

Annexe B: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6

Extract from: [Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 \(annexe D\)](#), published by the QAA in 2019.

An explanation of each classification

Students are assessed against the learning outcomes of their course and modules, with the curriculum providing opportunities to develop, practice and achieve the outcomes and demonstrate the characteristics associated with the level of learning of the stage of study and/or qualification.

Typically, learning outcomes include:

- knowledge and understanding
- cognitive and intellectual skills
- skills and capabilities related to employability
- transferable or key skills
- professional competences, where relevant.

Certain professional courses may include specific professional competence requirements set by PSRBs.

A student's grade or classification is determined by their level of attainment within this basic structure and their own engagement with the curricula and learning opportunities on offer to enhance their ability to apply the skills, methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects. Students are assessed throughout their course according to assessment criteria set at course or module level in line with generic institutional and sector descriptors and reference points.

Upon awarding a degree, a graduate can be expected to have demonstrated and possess the skills and attributes attached to their respective classification, as described below.

Not successful	Third-class honours	Lower second-class honours	Upper second-class honours	First-class honours
	(3rd)	(2.2)	(2.1)	(1st)
<p>The student did not achieve the required course learning outcomes and:</p> <p>did not consistently demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills</p> <p>did not consistently demonstrate adequate initiative and personal responsibility</p> <p>did not consistently demonstrate ability to reflect on their work</p> <p>did not consistently demonstrate problem-solving skills</p>	<p>The student achieved all their required course learning outcomes and:</p> <p>demonstrated knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills</p> <p>demonstrated initiative and exercised personal responsibility</p> <p>demonstrated some ability to reflect on their work</p> <p>demonstrated problem-solving skills</p>	<p>The student achieved all their required course learning outcomes and:</p> <p>demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills</p> <p>demonstrated initiative and personal responsibility</p> <p>demonstrated an ability to reflect on their work</p> <p>demonstrated strong problem-solving skills</p>	<p>The student achieved all their required course learning outcomes and:</p> <p>demonstrated thorough knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills</p> <p>demonstrated good initiative and personal responsibility</p> <p>demonstrated an ability to reflect critically on their work</p> <p>demonstrated thorough problem-solving skills</p>	<p>The student achieved all their required course learning outcomes and:</p> <p>consistently demonstrated advanced knowledge and understanding, cognitive, practical and transferable skills</p> <p>consistently demonstrated exceptional initiative and personal responsibility</p> <p>consistently demonstrated ability to reflect critically and independently on their work</p> <p>consistently demonstrated exceptional problem-solving skills</p>

Two conventions typically used in awarding degrees where threshold FHEQ Level 6/FQHEIS Level 10 standards may not have been met are summarised below.

Detailed descriptors

The following tables present a detailed articulation of how the broad graduate attributes acquired by students during their course might apply across different skills areas, competences and attributes.

Courses necessarily vary in what and how they assess, according to subject requirements. The different characteristics may not necessarily be assessed equally - providers are free to design courses with assessment weighted towards particular skills as they deem appropriate for meeting the required learning outcomes.

The criteria below present a holistic overview of the level a graduate would be expected to have reached during their degree. Not all descriptors will apply to all courses to the same extent: for example, numeracy and digital skills may not be as applicable to some arts courses as creativity skills, while the reverse might be true of some STEM subjects. If some criteria are not applicable to a given course, they may not need to be referenced.

Knowledge and understanding

A systematic extensive and comparative understanding of key aspects of the field of study, including coherent and detailed knowledge of the subject and critical understanding of theories and concepts, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student's knowledge and understanding of the subject is inadequate, without the required breadth or depth, with deficiencies in key areas.	The student has demonstrated a depth of knowledge and understanding in key aspects of their field of study, sufficient to deal with terminology, facts and concepts.	The student has demonstrated a sound breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding, if sometimes balanced towards the descriptive rather than the critical or analytical.	The student has demonstrated sophisticated breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, showing a clear, critical insight.	The student has shown exceptional knowledge and understanding, significantly beyond the threshold expectation of a graduate at this level and beyond what has been taught.
The student has demonstrated inadequate understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, including their limitations and ambiguities.	The student has demonstrated an understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles.	The student has consistently demonstrated an understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles as well as more specialised areas.	The student has demonstrated a thorough understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, and a sound understanding of more specialised areas.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, and in-depth knowledge, if not mastery of a range of specialised areas.
The student has not produced sufficient evidence of background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study.	The student has conducted general background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques, with the ability to extract relevant points.	The student has conducted background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques accurately, and can critically appraise academic sources.	The student has conducted thorough background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques accurately, and possesses a well-developed ability to critically appraise a wide range of sources.	The student has conducted independent, extensive and appropriate investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study well beyond the usual range, together with critical evaluation, to advance work and/or direct arguments.

Cognitive skills

A conceptual understanding of a level that is necessary to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems and comment on research and scholarship in the discipline, with an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has displayed an over-reliance on set sources. They have not demonstrated an adequate ability to select and evaluate reading and research.	The student has demonstrated the ability to select, evaluate and comment on reading, research and primary sources.	The student has selected, evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, sometimes beyond the set range.	The student has thoroughly selected, critically evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, usually beyond the set range.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to select, consider, evaluate, comment on and synthesise a broad range of research, primary sources, views and information and integrate references.
The student's arguments and explanations are weak and/or poorly constructed, and they are not able to critically evaluate the arguments of others or consider alternative views.	The student has shown the ability to devise and sustain an argument, with some consideration of alternative views, and can explain often complex matters and ideas.	The student has argued logically, with supporting evidence, and has demonstrated the ability to consider and evaluate a range of views and information. They have clearly and consistently explained complex matters and ideas.	The student has demonstrated the ability to make coherent, substantiated arguments, as well as the ability to consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a range of views and information. They have demonstrated a thorough, perceptive and thoughtful interpretation of complex matters and ideas.	The student has made consistent, logical, coherently developed, and substantiated arguments, and demonstrated the ability to systematically consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a wide range of views and information. They have demonstrated sophisticated perception, critical insight and interpretation of complex matters and ideas.
The student has shown a limited ability to solve problems and/or make decisions.	The student has demonstrated an ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods to do so, and the ability to make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances.	The student has consistently solved complex problems, selecting and applying a range of appropriate methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances.	The student has demonstrated thorough problem-solving skills, selecting and justifying their use of a wide-range of methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances with a degree of autonomy.	The student has demonstrated a wide range of extremely well-developed problem-solving skills, as well as a strong aptitude for decision-making with a high degree of autonomy, in the most complex and unpredictable circumstances.
The student has shown little or no real creativity.	The student has produced some creative work.	The student has consistently demonstrated creativity.	The student has shown a high level of creativity and originality throughout their work.	The student has demonstrated exceptional creative flair and originality.

Practical skills

An ability to manage one's individual learning and to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline or as necessary for the discipline.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has not demonstrated sufficient evidence of discipline-specific skills development or application.	The student has demonstrated evidence of developing and applying discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has consistently demonstrated the development and informed application of discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has demonstrated a capable and effective application of discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has demonstrated an accomplished and innovative application of discipline-specific specialist skills.
The student has attempted practical tasks/processes but followed a limited, procedural or mechanistic formula, and they contain errors, with little or no independence.	The student has completed practical tasks and/or processes accurately and with a degree of independence.	The student has consistently completed practical tasks/processes mainly independently in an accurate, well-coordinated and proficient way.	The student has performed practical tasks and/or processes autonomously, with accuracy and coordination.	The student has autonomously completed practical tasks and/or processes with a high degree of accuracy, coordination and proficiency.
The student has demonstrated a lack of technical, creative and/or artistic skills in most, or key, areas.	The student has demonstrated technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has a thorough command of highly-developed relevant technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has a full range of exceptional technical, creative and/or artistic skills.
The student has not presented their research findings clearly or effectively, and their gathering, processing and interpretation of data is unsatisfactory.	The student has presented their research findings, in several formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data effectively.	The student has consistently presented their research findings effectively and appropriately in many formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data efficiently and effectively.	The student has presented thorough research findings perceptively and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively.	The student has presented research findings perceptively, convincingly and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively.

Transferable skills

Personal and enabling skills appropriate to the discipline, including the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences, the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student is not able to sufficiently express ideas and convey clear meaning verbally, electronically and/or in writing, uses inaccurate terminology, with many errors in spelling, vocabulary and syntax. They have been unable to demonstrate consistently basic numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing, with clear expression and style. They have also demonstrated numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can consistently and confidently communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing. They show a clear, coherent, expressive style, with a range of vocabulary. They have consistently demonstrated strong numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions with a high-degree of proficiency verbally, electronically and in writing. They have a clear, fluent and expressive style with appropriate vocabulary. They have a high standard of numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to an accomplished level verbally, electronically and in writing. They have shown an accurate, fluent, sophisticated style. They possess exceptional numeracy and digital literacy skills.
The student has made infrequent contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has demonstrated a capability of making useful contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has consistently demonstrated the capability to make coherent and constructive contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has demonstrated the capability to make strong, valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with an understanding of team and leadership roles.	The student has demonstrated the capability to make clear, authoritative and valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with exceptional teamwork and leadership skills.
The student has demonstrated little or no ability to manage their learning and/or work without supervision.	The student has shown an ability to manage their learning and work with minimal or no supervision.	The student has consistently shown an ability to systematically manage their learning and work without supervision.	The student has shown a strong ability to systematically manage their learning and work without supervision.	The student has shown an exceptional ability to manage their learning on their own initiative, and work without supervision.
The student has not demonstrated adequate initiative or personal responsibility.	The student has demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has consistently demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has demonstrated exceptional initiative and/or personal responsibility.
The student has shown little or no ability to reflect on their work.	The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect on their work.	The student has consistently demonstrated a well-developed ability to reflect on their work.	The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect critically on their work.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to reflect critically and independently on their work.

Professional competences (to the extent that they are expressed by the course learning outcomes)

Typically, where a degree award requires an assessment of professional competencies, no award will be made if the student does not meet them. Providers remain free to set course learning outcomes above the threshold and classify students accordingly.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has not demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).	The student has demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a PSRB.			
The student has failed to adhere to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry.	The student has adhered to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry.			

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Tel: 01452 557000
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk