

TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

August 2009

These level descriptors comply with QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and provide guidance to programme teams when writing learning outcomes for programmes and modules. The descriptors can be used as they stand or adapted to meet the needs of specific subject, programme or professional contexts.

The descriptors are listed under QAA's four headings used in the Programme Specification:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Cognitive/Intellectual Skills
- Practical/Professional Skills
- Key Transferable Skills

The descriptors are provided for Level 7 (Masters) and Level 8 (Doctorate) and closely follow the QAA's Masters and Doctoral qualification descriptors. They attempt to demonstrate progression through the different levels of study in terms of both increasing complexity of knowledge and context, and also increasing academic and professional autonomy which is a central feature of the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy.

Schools and programme teams will determine whether or not it is necessary to provide discrete learning outcomes at Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma levels within Level 7 (Masters).

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS - KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Level 7	Level 8
Demonstrate a comprehensive and critical understanding of techniques/methodologies appropriate to their own research or advanced scholarship	Demonstrate a detailed and critical understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry or professional practice
Demonstrate 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	Demonstrate a systematic acquisition and understanding and analysis of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of the breadth and depth of knowledge in the discipline and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is aimed at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice	Create and interpret new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the frontier of the discipline, <u>or</u> area of professional practice, and merit publication
As appropriate to the field, has the awareness and ability to manage the implications of ethical dilemmas and work pro-actively with others to formulate solutions	As appropriate to the field, can analyse and manage the implications of ethical dilemmas and work pro-actively with others to formulate solutions

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS - COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

Level 7	Level 8
Able to integrate and synthesise diverse knowledge, evidence, concepts, theory and practice to promote understanding and/or good practice and solve foreseen and unforeseen problems	Able to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, or area of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
Able to make argued conclusions on the basis of incomplete and/or contested data	Able to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data
Able to challenge orthodoxy and formulate new/alternative hypotheses or solutions	Continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing significantly to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS – PRACTICAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Practical and professional skills are subject specific and descriptors should be developed by School or Programme Teams with reference to appropriate subject benchmarks and the requirements of relevant professional bodies. The general descriptors below reflect the increasing complexity of context within which the skills are applied and the increased level of autonomy with which the skills are used. They also highlight the importance of the ethical and legal framework of the particular discipline or profession. These factors should be clearly reflected in the subject specific Practical/Professional Skills developed by School or Programme Teams.

Level 7	Level 8
<p>Application of Skills Can operate ethically in complex and unpredictable, possibly specialised, situations and has a critical understanding of the issues governing good practice</p> <p>Autonomy in Skill Use Act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level</p>	<p>Application of Skills Can operate ethically in complex and unpredictable / specialised situations at the frontier of knowledge and professional practice and has a critical understanding of the issues governing good practice</p> <p>Autonomy in Skill Use Act autonomously and with initiative in complex and unpredictable situations</p>

POSTGRADUATE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS – KEY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Level 7	Level 8
<p>Plan & Manage Own Learning Demonstrate the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development</p> <p>Communication Skills Communicate complex academic or professional issues clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences</p> <p>Numeracy Skills Competent in the numeracy skills commensurate with the demands of research and scholarship in ways appropriate to the academic / professional context</p> <p>IT Skills Competent in the IT skills commensurate with the demands of research and scholarship in ways appropriate to the academic / professional context</p> <p>Work With Others Collaborate effectively with others in ways appropriate to the professional/academic context</p>	<p>Plan & Manage Own Learning Demonstrate the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development at a level of advanced academic enquiry or professional practice</p> <p>Communication Skills Communicate complex academic or professional issues and their own ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences</p> <p>Numeracy Skills Competent in the numeracy skills commensurate with the demands of research and scholarship in ways appropriate to the academic / professional context</p> <p>IT Skills Competent in the IT skills commensurate with the demands of research and scholarship in ways appropriate to the academic / professional context</p> <p>Work With Others Collaborate effectively with others in ways appropriate to the professional/academic context</p>