

**TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY**  
**UNDERGRADUATE AND PRE-DEGREE 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 from Level 3 (pre-degree) to Level 6 (final year of a first degree) and clearly demonstrate progression through the different levels of study in terms of both increasing complexity of knowledge and context, and also increasing student autonomy which is a central feature of the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy.

**UNDERGRADUATE AND PRE-DEGREE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS - KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Know and use a limited range of investigative procedures in simple, tutor-defined contexts	Identify and explain selected research methods used in the discipline and apply them in defined and limited contexts	Critically review and select from alternative research methods in more complex situations  Apply the skills of research/enquiry-based approaches	Plan, undertake and evaluate a negotiated, self-managed major project
Possess a given knowledge base which may be largely factual and/or uneven  Begin to recognise the scope of the discipline and its terminology	Describe, explain and use key elements of the foundation knowledge and key concepts of the discipline	Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of aspects of the discipline  Critically analyse a variety of ideas, contexts and frameworks associated with the discipline  Apply, question and relate appropriate knowledge / concepts to a range of activities	Demonstrate a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the discipline  Synthesise and critically appraise different aspects of disciplinary knowledge in complex contexts  Evaluate appropriate knowledge / concepts as an aid to problem-solving
Recognise the relevance of ethical issues in the discipline and relate these to own personal beliefs and values	Identify, where applicable, the role of ethics in the generation of knowledge in the discipline	Explore legal and ethical issues relevant to the generation of knowledge in the discipline	Analyse and evaluate the impact of ethical and legal issues relevant to the generation of knowledge in the discipline

**UNDERGRADUATE AND PRE-DEGREE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS - COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL SKILLS**

Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Gather data from given sources in closely-defined contexts with significant tutor guidance	Gather, record and describe, with guidance, data/evidence from a range of sources	Analyse, apply and interpret data/evidence from a variety of sources	Synthesise, appraise and evaluate data/evidence from appropriate sources to make independent judgements
Construct a supported argument or interpretation within tutor-defined contexts	Justify conclusions in defined and limited contexts	Employ balanced, logical and supported argument in a range of contexts	Question orthodoxy using balanced, logical and supported argument
Recognise that there are different interpretations of given data	Recognise the provisional and changing nature of knowledge	Demonstrate intellectual flexibility and openness to new ideas	Demonstrate intellectual flexibility and openness to new ideas
Can apply given tools/methods to a well-defined problem and show emerging recognition of the complexity of associated issues	Can apply given tools/methods accurately and carefully to a well-defined problem and begin to appreciate the complexity of associated issues	Can identify key areas of problems and choose appropriate tools/methods for their resolution in a considered manner	Is confident and flexible in identifying and defining complex problems and the application of appropriate knowledge, tools/methods to their solution

### UNDERGRADUATE AND PRE-DEGREE 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 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<b>Application of Skills</b> Can operate ethically in predictable, defined contexts that require use of a specified range of standard techniques	Can operate ethically in predictable, defined contexts that require use of a specified range of standard techniques	Can operate ethically in situations of varying complexity and predictability requiring the application of a wide range of techniques	Can operate ethically in complex and unpredictable contexts, requiring selection and application from a wide range of standard or innovative techniques
<b>Autonomy in Skill Use</b> Is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines	Is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines	Able to act with increasing autonomy, with reduced need for supervision and direction, within defined guidelines	Able to act autonomously with limited supervision or direction within agreed guidelines

### UNDERGRADUATE AND PRE-DEGREE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS - KEY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<b>Plan and Manage Own Learning</b> Demonstrate a developing ability to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses within criteria largely set by others	Identify own learning strengths and needs using feedback from assessments  Develop and implement a personal development plan to improve own learning	Reflect systematically on performance to further develop learning	Plan, manage and evaluate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills as part of a lifelong learning strategy
<b>Career Development &amp; Employability</b> Demonstrate developing ability to identify personal skills, interests and motivations and articulate the effect of these on programme choice	Identify and articulate personal skills, abilities, interests and motivations and relate these to career opportunities	Demonstrate a realistic match between career aspirations and personal aptitudes, interests and motivations	Demonstrate both employment potential and ability to manage future professional development
<b>Communication Skills</b> Demonstrate a developing ability to communicate in speech and writing in an academic context	Identify and use writing skills appropriate to the context  Communicate appropriately in speech in group discussions and as an individual	Select and use a range of communication methods appropriate to the context  Prepare, deliver and evaluate presentations to an audience	Communicate clearly, fluently and effectively in a range of styles appropriate to the context  Engage effectively in academic discussion and present arguments in a professional manner
<b>Numeracy Skills</b> Demonstrate a developing ability to apply numerical and statistical skills in simple contexts	Demonstrate numerical and statistical skills in simple contexts at a foundation level in the discipline	Apply numerical and statistical skills in more complex disciplinary contexts	Select, apply and evaluate appropriate numerical and statistical methods for complex and open-ended tasks
<b>IT Skills</b> Use basic IT tools (e.g. word-processing; spreadsheets; information searching) in simple contexts	Use basic IT tools (e.g. word-processing; spreadsheets; information searching) in tutor-defined contexts	Use a range of specialist software appropriate to the discipline	Select and evaluate software applications for different tasks within the context of the discipline
<b>Work with Others</b> Engage in team activities to enhance a co-operative approach to learning and working	Engage in team activities to enhance a co-operative approach to learning and working	Adopt a range of roles within a team and contribute to the effective working of the team	Recognise and evaluate factors which enhance group processes and team-working, and modify and evaluate own personal effectiveness within a team