PROFESSIONAL AWARD-TYPE DESCRIPTORS (AWARD CLASS: PROFESSIONAL)

FOR THE ALIGNMENT OF PROFESSIONAL AWARDS AT NFQ LEVELS 5, 6, 7, 8 AND 9.

QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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For the Alignment of Professional Awards at NFQ Levels 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Foreword

The expected learning outcomes of the new descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 – 9 are set out in the following table. Note that the levels of learning are cumulative—learning at Level N assumes attainment of Level N-1—the grey text is learning attained from a lower level. Outcomes expressed in the Level N descriptor are to be taken as included in the Level N+1 descriptor (whether or not this is made explicit in the table by the grey text) and the higher ones. The descriptors at Levels 5 and 6 were developed after the others and this is why there is no incremental formatting at Level 7 with respect to 6.

	Thread	L5 - Level 5 Professional Award	L6 - Level 6 Professional Award	L7 - Level 7 Professional Award	L8 - Level 8 Professional Award	L9 - Level 9 Professional Award
		Existing award-type descriptors (and therefore award titles) can be used in conjunction with these occupational award-type descriptors provided both are satisfied. Award-titles are not otherwise regulated by this descriptor. **Professional** in this context means there is • A stable occupational group requiring special training for membership; • A community of practice[1]; and • Ethical and technical standards for practice.	Existing award-type descriptors (and therefore award titles) can be used in conjunction with these occupational award-type descriptors provided both are satisfied. Award-titles are not otherwise regulated by this descriptor.			
Volume	Volume of corresponding programme	Variable.	Variable.	**Variable. Normally the volume of newly certified learning will be at least 30 credits or equivalent however, in exceptional conditions this may be waived by QQI.**	**Variable. Normally the volume of newly certified learning will be at least 30 credits or equivalent however, in exceptional conditions this may be waived by the QQI.**	**Variable. Normally the volume of newly certified learning will be at least 30 credits or equivalent however, in exceptional conditions this may be waived by the QQI.**
Purpose	The uses to which the knowledge, skill and competence will be put	The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are proper to autonomous professional practice at this level as a member of a well-defined professional community of practice, typically in a structured setting or in an organisation, as well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, the community of practice, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training	The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are proper to autonomous professional practice at this level as a member of a well-defined professional community of practice, typically in a structured setting or in an organisation, as well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, the community of practice, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training	The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are proper to <u>autonomous professional practice typically in a structured setting or in an organisation</u>, as well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training	The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are proper to <u>independent professional practice</u>, well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training	The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are proper to <u>advanced and/or innovative independent professional practice</u>, well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training
Knowledge – Breadth and Kind	Knowledge scope and coherence	Broad current general knowledge and an integrated body of specialised knowledge required to support a craft or occupational discipline and knowledge of its connections with related activities; Specialised knowledge here involves some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking with significant depth in some areas	Broad current general knowledge and an integrated body of specialised knowledge required to support a craft or an occupational discipline and knowledge of the connections with related **disciplines**; Specialised knowledge here involves significant underpinning theory and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	Broad and up-to-date general knowledge and specialised knowledge of a variety of areas comprising a professional discipline and of the connections between these areas and with related disciplines	Broad and up-to-date general knowledge and specialised knowledge of a variety of areas comprising a professional discipline and of the connections between these areas and with related disciplines; to include knowledge about recent developments and trends in the professional discipline or its practice	Broad and up-to-date general knowledge and specialised knowledge of a variety of areas comprising a professional discipline and of the connections between these areas and related disciplines; to include knowledge about recent developments and trends in the professional discipline or its practice;
	Knowledge structure	Practical understanding of facts, concepts, rules, regulations, methods, materials, tools, devices, techniques; their development and limitations; and how they are applied in current occupational activity	Practical understanding of facts, concepts, rules, regulations, **abstract models**, methods, materials, tools, devices, **technologies**; their development and limitations; and how they are applied in current occupational activity	Understanding of facts, concepts, rules, models, schools of thought, methods, technology; their development and limitations; and how they arise and are applied in current professional practice	**Critical** understanding of facts, concepts, rules, models, schools of thought, methods, technology; their development and limitations; and how they arise and are applied in current professional practice	Comprehensive and critical evaluation of current developments and trends in the relevant professional or academic literature and as the basis for research or innovation and strategic change and leadership

[1] The concept of a 'community of practice' is explained in the context of QQI's work in a QQI background paper entitled "Qualifications Systems and Related Concepts". http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Consultation/Qualifications%20Systems%20and%20related%20concepts.pdf

Professional Award-type Descriptors (Award Class: Professional)
For the Alignment of Professional Awards at NFQ Levels 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

		Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	Knowledge of issues	Knowledge of the context for professional activity (familiarity with the community of practice and with safety, employment, technological and regulatory perspectives) and awareness of disciplines likely to be encountered as a member of the community of practice	Knowledge of the context for professional activity (familiarity with the community of practice and with safety, employment, technological and regulatory perspectives and with relevant economic, social and environmental issues) and awareness of other disciplines likely to be encountered as a member of the community of practice	Knowledge of the context for professional practice (including regulatory, economic, scientific, technological, social and cultural aspects) and awareness of other disciplines likely to be encountered as a practitioner and member of the profession	Knowledge of the context for professional practice (including regulatory, economic, scientific, technological, social and cultural aspects) and of significant issues at the interfaces with related disciplines and professions	Knowledge of the wider context for practice in the profession including critical awareness and anticipation of the fundamental issues for the profession and at the interfaces with other disciplines and professions
Skill and know-how – Range and Selectivity	Use cognitive and practical skills (analytical and synthetic) to solve problems	Select from a broad range of specialised skills and tools and apply them to problems arising in professional activity; problems here are usually predictable but are subject to change	Select from a comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools and apply them to the generation of creative solutions to problems arising in professional activity	Select and apply advanced skills to analyse and respond to unpredictable and complex problems arising in the profession and its reflective practice.	Select, modify and apply advanced skills to critically analyse, research (under close guidance) and formulate responses to unpredictable, complex and ill-defined problems arising in the profession and its reflective professional practice	Select, modify and apply advanced skills, including research or innovation skills, to critically analyse, research independently and formulate responses to unpredictable, complex and ill-defined problems with many interacting factors, in order to develop new knowledge or procedures and integrate knowledge from other disciplines
	Draw insightful conclusions	Evaluate and use information to draw conclusions and determine solutions to predictable problems arising in professional activity that take due account of social, field-specific and ethical insights	Plan and develop investigative strategies and evaluate information to determine creative, evidence-informed solutions to predictable and unpredictable problems and respond to unpredictable change arising in professional activity that take due account of social, field-specific and ethical insights	Prepare evidence-based conclusions that take due account of social, disciplinary and ethical insights	Prepare and analyse evidence-based conclusions that take due account of social, disciplinary and ethical insights	Prepare and evaluate evidence-based conclusions that take due account of social, disciplinary and ethical insights.
	Communicate and influence	Communicate oral and written information effectively in familiar contexts; engage in the transfer of knowledge and skills within the professional community of practice; convey information and decisions, to specialists and non-specialists, including clients	Communicate complex oral and written information effectively in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills within the professional community of practice; justify decisions, to specialists and non-specialists, including clients	Communicate information effectively, transfer one's knowledge and skills, and justify decisions, to specialists and non-specialists, including clients	Communicate advanced information, transfer one's knowledge and skills, and justify decisions, to specialists and non-specialists, including clients	Communicate complex information effectively, transfer one's knowledge and skills, and justify recommendations and research findings, to specialists and non-specialists, including clients; influence and lead professional practice
Competence – Context, Role, learning-to-learn and Insight	Exercising autonomy and judgement	Exercise autonomy and judgement in applying knowledge and skills in varied and specific contexts including professional practice and learning	Exercise autonomy and judgement in applying knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts including professional practice and learning	Exercise autonomy and judgement in applying knowledge and skills in a wide variety of contexts including professional practice and study	Exercise autonomy and judgement in applying knowledge and skills in a wide variety of complex contexts including professional practice and study,	Exercise autonomy and judgement in applying knowledge and skills in a wide variety of complex contexts, including professional practice and study, and transfer them to unfamiliar and emerging contexts
	Exercising responsibility	Exercise initiative and independence in professional activity, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs and for decisions in work and learning contexts	Exercise initiative and independence in professional activity, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs and for decisions in work and learning contexts	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making and decisions in unpredictable work or study contexts	Manage complex and innovative technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making and decisions in unpredictable and unfamiliar work or study contexts, balancing responsibilities towards service-users and employer,	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for decisions and contributing to professional knowledge and practice
	Working with others	Act effectively in team roles within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups Assist in the supervision of routine work or learning activities Take responsibility for leading on some occupational activities Contribute to the review and development of the performance of others	Act effectively in team roles within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups Exercise supervision in contexts of work or learning activities Lead a variety of occupational activities Contribute to the review and development of the performance of others; Take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or learning activities	Act effectively in team roles and take responsibility for managing individuals and groups	Act effectively in team roles and take responsibility for managing individuals and lead complex and heterogeneous groups	Act effectively in team roles and take responsibility for managing individuals and lead complex and heterogeneous groups and for reviewing the strategic performance of teams

		Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
	Learning and teaching	Maintain professional knowledge and skill taking responsibility for own learning within a managed environment; Provide learning support, and guidance to others in the professional contexts Seek guidance as appropriate when working independently	Evaluate and maintain professional knowledge and skill taking responsibility for own learning within a structured learning environment; Provide learning support and guidance to learners in the professional context; assist others in identifying learning needs; Seek guidance as appropriate when working independently	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs; seek necessary guidance when working independently	Manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically; seek necessary guidance when working independently and provide guidance to peers	Evaluate learning needs of self and others and take responsibility for continuing academic/ professional development of same;
	Attitudes	Assume full responsibility for consistency of self- understanding and behaviour at personal, occupational, societal, and environmental levels	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others at the personal, occupational, societal, and environmental levels	Express an internalised personal world-view (see Notes below) manifesting solidarity with others at all levels including the personal, professional, societal, and environmental	Express a comprehensive internalised, personal and professional world-view, manifesting solidarity with others at all levels including the personal, professional, societal and environmental	Scrutinise and reflect on social and professional norms and relationships and act to change them in the interests of professional standards, society or the wider environment
Articulation and Progression	Possible entry points to corresponding programmes and the associated ECTS (or equivalent) credit	Access arrangements must include mechanisms for recognising prior learning. Progression arrangements must be established	Access arrangements must include mechanisms for recognising prior learning. Progression arrangements must be established.	From completion of a broad secondary-level education (to NFQ Level 5) into autonomous professional practice (normal minimum 180 ECTS or equivalent) but normally from an Ordinary Bachelor's Degree into autonomous professional practice ; a change of discipline will involve an instructional element	From completion of a broad secondary-level education (to Level 5) into autonomous professional practice (normal minimum 240 ECTS or equivalent) but normally from an Ordinary or Honours Bachelor's Degree into autonomous professional practice; a change of discipline will involve an instructional element	From an Ordinary or Honours Bachelor's Degree into autonomous professional practice (normal minimum 120 and 90 ECTS respectively); a change of discipline will involve an instructional element
Assessment	What must be assessed and the level of rigour expected	The minimum expected knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award must be expressed and validly and reliably assessed. This will involve integrative assessment to ensure transversal learning outcomes have been achieved	The minimum expected knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award must be expressed and validly and reliably assessed. This will involve integrative assessment to ensure transversal learning outcomes have been achieved.	The minimum expected knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award must be expressed and validly and reliably assessed	The minimum expected knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award must be expressed and validly and reliably assessed	The minimum expected knowledge, skill and competence associated with the award must be expressed and validly and reliably assessed

NOTES:

World-view: A set of fundamental beliefs, attitudes, values, etc., determining or constituting a comprehensive outlook on life, the universe, etc. Oxford Dictionary 1997

Research: The word 'research' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method'. Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area 2005 (and Dublin Descriptors before this)

Cumulative levels: Note that the levels of learning are cumulative—learning at Level N assumes attainment of Level N-1—the grey text is learning attained from a lower level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The gloss above contains material (directly or paraphrased) from some of the following sources and is generally informed by them. The text would be unreadable if fragments were individually cited.

National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)
http://www.nfq.ie

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) UK
http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QFUK_Joint_Report_140pp.pdf

Dublin Descriptors Joint Quality Initiative
http://www.jointquality.org/content/descriptors/CompletesetDublinDescriptors.doc

Qualifications Framework Denmark
http://en.iu.dk/transparency/qualifications-frameworks/levels/level-7

Australian Qualifications Framework (incl. Vocational Graduate Diploma) (Also the final version adopted in March 2011)
http://www.aqf.edu.au/Portals/0/Documents/The%20Australian%20Qualifications%20 Framework%20for%20MCTEE%20approval%2019%20Nov%202010.pdf

Accounting Threshold Learning Outcomes – Draft 2
(Australian Business Deans Council and Australian Teaching and Learning Council)
http://www.abdc.edu.au/download.php?id=244793,246,1

German Qualifications Framework
http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/fileadmin/Seiteninhalte/Dokumente/kmk/ kmk_englisch/kmk_qualification_framework_apr_05.pdf

Criteria for Academic Bachelor's and Master's Curricula (Engineering) Netherlands
http://www.jointquality.org/content/descriptors/AC_English_Gweb.pdf

Implementation Of The Bologna Process: Learning Outcomes And Level Descriptors
http://www.tcd.ie/vpcao/academic-development/assets/pdf/tcd_level_descriptors_full_text_council_8_march_06.pdf

UKIPG Education Position Statement
http://www.ukipg.org.uk/publications/Educ_Position_Statement.pdf

A number of university websites detailing information about relevant business programmes were also considered
http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QFUK_Joint_Report_140pp.pdf