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|  | **Professional Award-type Descriptors**  **at NFQ Levels 5 and 6** |
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# Foreword

The expected learning outcomes of the new descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 are set out in the following table. The grey text at NFQ Level 6 indicates text carried up from the NFQ Level 5 descriptor. Outcomes expressed in the Level 5 descriptor are to be taken as included in the Level 6 descriptor (whether or not this is made explicit in the table) and the higher ones. Relevant parts of the NFQ Grid of Level Indicators are provided for reference in the grey panels.

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| **New Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 and 6** | | | |  |
|  | **Thread** | **Level 5 Professional Award (new proposal)**  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]](#footnote-1); and * Ethical and technical standards for practice. | **Level 6 Professional Award (new proposal)**  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. | ***Level 7 Professional Award***  ***(Determined in 2011)*** |
| **Volume** | Volume of corresponding programme | Variable | Variable | *Variable. Normally the volume of newly certified learning will be at least 30 (HET) credits or equivalent however, in exceptional conditions this may be waived.* |
| **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 autonomous professional practice typically in a structured setting or in an organisation, as well as relevant to personal development, participation in society, employment and study including access to additional formal education and training* |
| ***Knowledge-breadth*** |  | Broad range of knowledge | Specialised knowledge of a broad area | *Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas* |
| ***Knowledge Kind*** |  | Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas | Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory | *Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas* |
| **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* |
| **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* |
| **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* |
| ***Know-how and skill: range*** |  | Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools | Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools | *Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study* |
| ***Know-how and skill: selectivity*** |  | Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems | Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems | *Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes* |
| ***Know-how and skill: 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.* |
| **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* |
| **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* |
| ***Competence-context*** |  | Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts | Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts | *Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts* |
| ***Competence-role*** |  | Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities; join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups | Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for the allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups | *Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work* |
| ***Competence-learning-to-learn*** |  | Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment | Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs | *Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group* |
| ***Competence-insight*** |  | Assume full responsibility for consistency of self- understanding and behaviour | Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others | *Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others* |
| **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* |
| **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* |
| **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* |
|  | **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* |
| **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* |
| **Articulation and**  **Progression** |  | 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. |  |
| **Assessment** |  | 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. |  |

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](https://publicadmin.qqi.ie/Downloads/Consultation/Qualifications%20Systems%20and%20related%20concepts.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)