

The NICATS Generic Level Descriptors

1. Summary of the generic level descriptors

These level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum, in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those which follow.

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

ENTRY LEVEL - employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts, and carry out directed activity under close supervision.

LEVEL 1 - employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.

LEVEL 2 - apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine; and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.

LEVEL 3 - apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.

LEVEL 4 - develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

LEVEL 5 - generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 6 - critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilizing specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; and accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 7 - display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 8 - make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.

2. Table of generic level descriptors

	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas with dependency on ideas of others. • Exercise basic skills. • Receive and pass on information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts. • Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable. • Undertake the performance of clearly defined tasks. • Assume a limited range of roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out directed activity under close supervision. • Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension. • Demonstrate a narrow range of skills. • Apply known solutions to familiar problems. • Present and record information from readily available sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts. • Utilise a clear choice of routine responses. • Co-operate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions. • Carry restricted responsibility for quantity and quality of output. • Operate under direct supervision and quality control.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas. • Make comparisons. • Interpret available information. • Demonstrate a range of skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine. • Co-ordinate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy. • Achieve outcomes within time constraints. • Accept increased responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories. • Access and evaluate information independently. • Analyse information and make reasoned judgements. • Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills. • Select from a considerable choice of procedures. • Give presentations to an audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation. • Accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output. • Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.

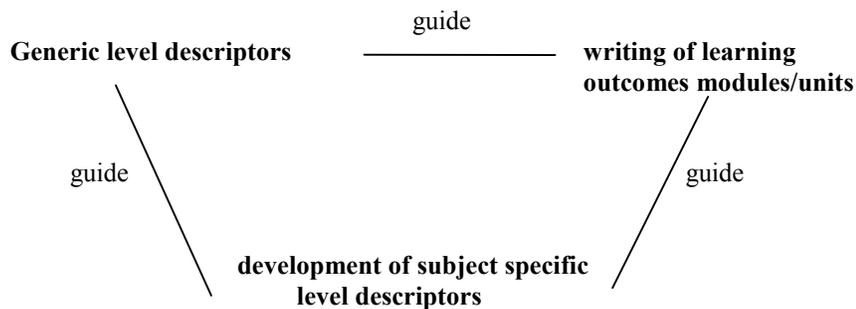
Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base. • Employ a range of specialised skills. • Determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems. • Generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined but often unfamiliar problems. • Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities. • Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake self-directed and a limited amount of directive activity. • Operate within broad general guidelines or functions. • Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of outputs. • Meet specified quality standards.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level. • Command wide ranging, specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills. • Formulate appropriate responses to resolve well defined and abstract problems. • Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of technical, professional or management functions. • Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review, consolidate, and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge. • Utilise highly specialised technical or scholastic skills across an area of study. • Utilise research skills. • Critically evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of situations. • Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills. • Demonstrate expertise in highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity. • Design and apply appropriate research methodologies. • Communicate results of research to peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate command of methodological issues. • Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.

3. **Guidelines for the use of the generic level descriptors**

- 3.1. The proposed generic level descriptors are not definitive. Modifications will be needed as a consequence of experience in specific curricular areas.
- 3.2. The InCCA report (September 1998) has recommended that the “*descriptors developed by NICATS should be adopted as the basis upon which to build a common approach to the determination of levels across the Further and Higher Education sectors*”.
- 3.3. The level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum. Each level subsumes the characteristics of lower levels.
- 3.4. Levels are not intrinsically related to years of study.
- 3.5. The level descriptors are designed to be generic in nature. As the use of the word ‘generic’ implies, the descriptors are intended to integrate vocational, academic and professional aspects of learning and apply to all learning contexts - classwork, practical work, work-based learning and so on. They are not intended to be prescriptive but are designed to provide a guideline to practitioners involved in the design and delivery of the curriculum. They have been developed with the intention that the curriculum specialist will use his/her professional expertise to translate them into his/her own subject area.
- 3.6. The level descriptors are designed to:
 - a) Act as a guide to the writing of learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria for units.

Generic level descriptors can either be used directly to guide the writing of learning outcomes and assessment criteria or to develop subject specific level descriptors, which in turn guide the writing of learning outcomes (see diagram below).

Figure 3: The use of generic level descriptors to guide curriculum design



(Taken from the Welsh Higher Education Credit Framework Handbook, March 1995)

- b) Guide the allocation of a unit to a level (via its learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria for units).

The level to which the unit of assessment is ascribed will be indicated primarily in the assessment criteria and their relationship to level descriptors; to a lesser extent in the learning outcomes. It may be possible for learning outcomes to be similar in adjacent levels as long as the assessment criteria are distinct and relate to level descriptors appropriately (see guidelines on ascribing level section 6.7.2).

The HEQC Working Paper: “*Towards a Better Understanding of the Meaning and Use of Level in Setting Explicit Academic Standards*” (1997) explains that the allocation of a level occurs via a process of ‘triangulation’. The parameters of this process are:

- contextualisation which relates to how, where and when the concept is being applied;
- socialisation which relates to the development of a shared understanding of how the concept is applied within a particular context i.e. the use of a common language, conceptual vocabulary and standards;
- cross-referencing to the levels above and below.

The paper explains that:

“traditionally, much of this process of ‘triangulation’ has been implicit within the working practices of professional communities. The demand for greater explicitness is resulting in more formalised and consistent approaches to explaining the basis for triangulation through greater specification (e.g. levels descriptors, learning outcomes, marking and grading criteria, degree descriptors). Such specifications describe the qualities, attributes and behaviours which programmes are expected to develop and assess as learning progresses”.

- 3.7. The generic level descriptors can also be used to aid the assessment of claims of credit for prior learning and assist the process of validation.
- 3.8. Some descriptors are more relevant than others depending on the area of study. For example, certain descriptors will be important to physiotherapy, art and design and science courses but will play little or no part in history or English literature. The level descriptors are not prescriptive and the extent of coverage necessary will be determined by the requirements of the particular subject area.
- 3.9. Learning undertaken following the achievement of an award at a given level (e.g. a degree) will not necessarily be at the same or higher level. The credit assigned to a module/unit should be at the level appropriate to its learning outcomes and assessment criteria, irrespective of the programme of which it forms a part. **For example**, there are many certificates and diplomas aimed at graduates in non-related disciplines. They should be placed at the appropriate NICATS level, despite being “postgraduate in time”.
- 3.10. ‘Post experience’ learning can be at any level and there is no necessary relationship between post experience programmes and NICATS level 7, which equates with the current ‘Masters’ level. Programmes designed for learners with experience may be at any level.
- 3.11. Many institutions admit learners with experience giving credit for their prior learning (AP(E)L) at an appropriate level.
- 3.12. Institutions offering four year undergraduate programmes (often referred to as “undergraduate masters degrees” (UGM)), such as M.Eng. awards should clearly identify the correct level at which learners will achieve the learning outcomes.
- 3.13. Institutions may wish to develop regulations permitting students to take modules or units at levels lower than that of the award as a whole, where this is appropriate to the programme concerned. **For example**, introductory Japanese might be taken as part of a Masters degree. The level of achievement should be clearly identified. This will enable the level of the learning outcome to be identified on the transcript whatever the stage of learning development.

3.5 Guidance notes for the table of level descriptors

ENTRY LEVEL

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic practical skills within highly structured contexts, and carry out directed activity under close supervision

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas with unquestioning acceptance of ideas.• Exercise basic skills.• Receive and pass on information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts.• Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable.• Undertake the performance of clearly defined tasks.• Assume a limited range of roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out directed activity under close supervision.• Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.

ENTRY LEVEL: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas.
Skills	Exercise basic skills.
Problem solving	Dependency on ideas of others.
Information management	Receive and pass on information.

Elementary comprehension: Learning through multiple repetition of simple responses to simple information stimuli, no generation of new ideas. Recall is dependent upon regular practice of skills.

Processes

Context	Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts.
Process	Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable.
Role & function	Assume a limited range of roles.

Routine tasks undertaken in familiar context with no variation in the criteria for performance of the tasks. Roles will be very specific and not normally demand transferable skills. Because a very wide range of potential is represented at this level, it is important to note that progression is measured from each learner's actual start point (self referencing).

Accountability

Autonomy	Carry out directed activity under close supervision.
Output	Externally monitored.
Quality	Externally monitored.

A very high degree of support is provided for the learning process under close supervision. No self assessment i.e. total reliance on external monitoring of output and quality.

LEVEL 1

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension.• Demonstrate a narrow range of skills.• Apply known solutions to familiar problems.• Present and record information from readily available sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts.• Utilise a clear choice of routine responses.• Co-operate with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions.• Carry restricted responsibility for quantity and quality of output.• Operate under direct supervision and quality control.

LEVEL 1: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension.
Skills	Demonstrate a narrow range of skills.
Problem solving	Apply known solutions to familiar problems.
Information management	Present and record information from readily available sources.

“The implication is that the level requires a knowledge base without which the tasks and procedures cannot be undertaken, but that it consists of a discrete and limited set of data and known responses - a table of right answers, as it were”. (NZQA, 1996). Limited generation of ideas from information supplied.

Processes

Context	Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts.
Process	Utilise a clear choice of routine responses.
Role & function	Co-operate with others.

The essential differences between entry level and level 1 lie in the introduction of a limited range of choice and the increased range and complexity of the tasks. The ability to operate in a clearly defined (structured) role within a cooperative working environment may be required.

Accountability

Autonomy	Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions.
Output	Carry restricted responsibility for quantity and quality of output.
Quality	Operate under direct supervision and quality control.

Able to operate independently in familiar contexts taking some responsibility for the tasks and procedures. Requires guidance and support with regular checking from external sources.

LEVEL 2

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine; and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas.• Make comparisons.• Interpret available information.• Demonstrate a range of skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine.• Co-ordinate with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy.• Achieve outcomes within time constraints.• Accept increased responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking.

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories.• Access and evaluate information independently.• Analyse information and make reasoned judgements.• Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills.• Select from a considerable choice of procedures.• Give presentations to an audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation.• Accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output.• Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.

LEVEL 3

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories.• Access and evaluate information independently.• Analyse information and make reasoned judgements.• Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills.• Select from a considerable choice of procedures.• Give presentations to an audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation.• Accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output.• Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.

LEVEL 3: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Apply knowledge in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories.
Skills	Apply skills in a range of complex activities.
Problem solving	Analyse information and make reasoned judgements. Employ a range of responses, to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems.
Information management	Independently access and evaluate information.

Some understanding of theory and the ability to analyse information at a relatively low level is required. Relevant underlying principles must be understood and applied in mainly familiar but some unfamiliar situations. Performance at this level moves towards the generation of responses as opposed to the selection of routine responses.

Processes

Context	Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills.
Process	Select from a considerable choice of procedures.
Role & function	Present information to an audience.

The increased complexity at this level is defined in terms of the range of skills, the choice of actions, and the ability to present information to others. The organisation of such information should reflect the intellectual demands required at level 3. Presentations should be examples of work products and as such can be visual, oral, aural etc.

Accountability

Autonomy	Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation.
Output	Accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output.
Quality	Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.

At this level, there is a requirement for learners to become self-directed and, in some circumstances, undertake a leadership role. Supervision and support may be required. As stated in the NZQA document (1996) there are logical levels of accountability for, for example, an entry level tertiary student, a qualified craftworker or a supervisor in an industrial setting.

LEVEL 4

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base.• Employ a range of specialised skills.• Determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems.• Generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined but often unfamiliar problems.• Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities.• Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake self-directed and a limited amount of directive activity.• Operate within broad general guidelines or functions.• Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of outputs.• Meet specified quality standards.

LEVEL 4: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base.
Skills	Employ a range of specialised skills.
Problem solving	Determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems, generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined but often unfamiliar problems.
Information management	Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies.

A rigorous approach involves logical validity and accuracy in argument, judgement or conduct. There is a gradual shift at this level from well defined to abstract thought processes. There is greater complexity of knowledge, skills and attributes and the generation of ideas through the analysis of well-defined information and concepts. At this level research and investigative skills are being developed; information must be processed and analysed in order to complete required activities.

Processes

Context	Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities.
Process	Exercise judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, equipment, services and techniques.
Role & function	Organise work for self and/or others.

“Increased complexity at this level involves a shift towards either very varied methods and procedures or in those that are specialised and technical” (NZQA, 1996 p.14). Process outcomes are not necessarily predictable or predetermined. Judgement is required in planning and selecting appropriate responses to a variety of information occurring in multiple contexts.

Accountability

Autonomy	Undertake self-directed and a limited amount of directive activity, operate within broad general guidelines or functions.
Output	Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of outputs.
Quality	Meet specified quality standards.

Full responsibility and self direction for all outcomes is required at this level. The individual still operates under general guidance. The leadership role may be extended.

LEVEL 5

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level.• Command wide ranging, specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills.• Formulate appropriate responses to resolve well defined and abstract problems.• Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of technical, professional or management functions.• Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 5: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level.
Skills	Command wide ranging, specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills.
Problem solving	Formulate appropriate responses to resolve well defined and abstract problems.
Information management	Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information.

Edwards (in NZQA document, 1996, p.15) mentions the generation of ideas and the transformation of data not in readily useable form at a level characterised by analysis and abstraction. At this level the formulation of the problems to be solved becomes a consideration.

Processes

Context	Planning and design related to products, services, operations or processes.
Process	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills to make and execute judgements across a broad range of functions. Exercise appropriate judgement.
Role & function	Technical, professional or management/supervisory.

The utilisation of diagnostic and creative skills is introduced at this level to represent higher order aspects of problem solving. Increased emphasis on judgement and a command of a specialised area are key features at this level.

Accountability

Autonomy	Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters.
Output	Determine and achieve personal and/or group outcomes.

Accountability is defined more in terms of a function than a specific task. The ability to negotiate outcomes under guidance and to take personal responsibility for planning and delivery is required.

LEVEL 6

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilizing specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; and accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically review, consolidate, and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge.• Utilise highly specialised technical, scholastic or basic research skills across an area of study.• Critically evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of situations.• Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 6: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge	Critically review, consolidate, and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge.
Skills	Utilise highly specialised technical, scholastic or basic research skills across an area of study.
Problem solving	Critically evaluate.
Information management	Independently access new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources.

The creation of ideas and solutions through analysis and transformation at an abstract level which Edwards (in the NZQA document, 1996) describes as the level of synthesis.

Processes

Process	Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of situations.
Role & function	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.

A high level of complexity requiring the exercise of significant judgement in a wide range of complex and variable contexts. The NZQA document (1996) points out however that distinguishing between the complexity of this and the flanking levels is not easy because complexity varies from learning area to learning area and within learning areas. Intellectual skills and attributes and accountability are thus likely to be more reliable indicators.

Accountability

Autonomy	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.
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“Full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of work and learning including planning, resourcing, quality standards and/or secondary responsibility for the work and learning of others” (NZQA document, 1996, p.18)

LEVEL 7

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision making including use of supervision

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills.• Demonstrate expertise in highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity.• Design and apply appropriate research methodologies.• Communicate results of research to peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 7: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

Knowledge Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills.

Skills Demonstrate expertise in highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills.

The most significant characteristic is the exploration of boundaries where preceding levels focused on knowledge and skills within them.

Processes

Process Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity.

Role & function Design and apply appropriate research methodologies.
Communicate results of research to peers.

Highly complex tasks and procedures are featured at this level

Accountability

Autonomy Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.

Accountability is usually to peers rather than to superiors. The learner is responsible for initiating supervisory and peer support contacts.

LEVEL 8

Summary of level descriptor

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes

Complete table of level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills & attributes	Processes	Accountability
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry.• Command highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate command of methodological issues.• Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 8: Guidelines for Interpretation

Intellectual skills and attributes

- Knowledge** Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry.
- Skills** Command highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills.

*Make a **significant** and **original** contribution - the essential difference between level 7 and level 8 is the satisfaction of both of these requirements.*

Processes

- Process** Demonstrate command of methodological issues.
- Role & function** Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue.

Learners will have command and confidence in the application of discipline-related research methods and in the discussion of methodological issues

Accountability

- Autonomy** Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.