

Undergraduate Level Descriptors and Principles

This document is designed to help academic staff who are developing a new undergraduate paper at Level 5, Level 6 or Level 7 on the [New Zealand Qualifications Framework](#) (NZQF). These levels normally correspond, respectively, with the three main levels at which undergraduate courses are offered by a university: 100-level, 200-level and 300-level.

In this document, you will find some general guidance on how to think through the process of ensuring your new paper sits at the appropriate level. It also supplies language to help you understand what makes each level distinctive and to inform the whole development process. Seeing each level side by side should help you to work out how to match your paper to the required level.

This is how you might think through the levelling of your new paper...

Knowledge, Skills and Application:

As you begin to develop a new paper, it is important to ensure that it is pitched at the correct level. This means paying attention to the level of learning required of the students and the knowledge, skills and application that they will be able to demonstrate once they have passed the paper.

The following tables provide language that will help you to understand what your paper should be achieving at Levels 5, 6 and 7. The first set of wording in each of the three categories derives from the NZQF (partly amended by CUAP for the adoption of universities). The second set of wording is drawn from comparable qualification frameworks. It will further illustrate, clarify and expand on the NZQF language to give you a richer understanding of what is expected.

Please do not copy-and-paste any of the statements in the tables. Instead, you should construct learning outcomes that might borrow key words from these statements but are specifically tailored to your particular paper. These statements are intended as guideposts towards your own outcomes that will be pitched correctly for each level.

LEVEL 5: NZQF wording

Knowledge:	Skills:	Application:
<p>Broad operational or technical and theoretical knowledge within a specific field of work or study.</p>	<p>Select and apply a range of solutions to familiar and sometimes unfamiliar problems; and</p> <p>Select and apply a range of standard and non-standard processes relevant to the field of work or study.</p>	<p>Complete self-management of learning and performance within defined contexts; and</p> <p>Some responsibility for the management of learning and performance of others.</p>
To put that in other words, Level 5 study will involve:		
<p>An introductory understanding or overall appreciation of the body of knowledge that constitutes a subject/discipline/sector;</p> <p>Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles of the subject/discipline/sector;</p> <p>An awareness of the dynamic nature of knowledge and understanding; and/or</p> <p>An understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other sources, and of the importance of this difference.</p>	<p>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to a subject/discipline/sector;</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to address defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts; and/or</p> <p>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to a subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters; and/or</p> <p>Apply knowledge, skills and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In practical contexts • In using some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector • To practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.

LEVEL 6: NZQF wording

Knowledge:	Skills:	Application:
<p>Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in a field of work or study.</p>	<p>Analyse and generate solutions to familiar and unfamiliar problems; and</p> <p>Select and apply a range of standard and non-standard processes relevant to the field of work or study.</p>	<p>Complete self-management of learning and performance within dynamic contexts; and</p> <p>Responsibility for leadership within dynamic contexts.</p>
To put that in other words, Level 6 study will involve:		
<p>A knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of the subject/discipline/sector;</p> <p>Specialist knowledge in some areas;</p> <p>A discerning understanding of a defined range of core theories, concepts, principles and terminology;</p> <p>Awareness and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms ; and/or</p> <p>Awareness and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes.</p>	<p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings in a subject/discipline/sector;</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems and issues; and/or</p> <p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings in a subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in contexts that are subject to the changing nature of work and technology • within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions; and/or <p>Apply knowledge, skills and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In using a range of professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector, a few of which are advanced and/or complex • In carrying out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional-level problems and issues • To adapt routine practices within accepted standards.

LEVEL 7: NZQF wording		
Knowledge:	Skills:	Application:
Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of work or study.	Analyse, generate solutions to unfamiliar and sometimes complex problems; select, adapt and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study.	Advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study.
To put that in other words, Level 7 study will involve:		
<p>Knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles;</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education;</p> <p>Practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work; and/or</p> <p>Broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.</p>	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</p> <p>Well-developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities • analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems • transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others; and/or <p>The ability to use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>The ability to determine, refine, adapt and use appropriate methods and advanced cognitive and practical skills to address problems that have limited definition and involve many interacting factors; and/or</p> <p>The ability to apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility.</p>

The Graduate Profile:

Your new paper will be part of a qualification that has a [graduate profile](#). Taken together, all the papers in that qualification should develop the whole of that profile. Think about how your paper will make a contribution. Your paper is not likely to contribute to all the graduate attributes. Be clear about which ones you have in mind and then begin to think about how the elements that comprise your paper will work towards that end.

Making it Work:

The knowledge, skills and application you are aiming for, along with the relevant graduate attributes, will be reflected in the various elements that comprise the paper. This means paying attention to four things in particular.

1. Prerequisites: Have you ensured that the students coming into your paper have the required prior learning to achieve the level of learning intended and have the required admission criteria and prerequisites? Think through the issue of progression to make sure that students are engaged in sequential learning, both in level and in content. Consider how your paper will fit in with other papers in your qualification and in feeder qualifications.

2. Learning Outcomes: Do the learning outcomes accurately reflect the level of learning required? One way of ensuring this is to borrow from the language given in the above tables. Weave that language into the learning outcomes for your paper. It is desirable to include learning outcomes that reach across knowledge, skills, and application.

3. Learning Activities / Workload Expectations: Are your learning activities and workload expectations appropriate to the level at which students are learning? Ideally, your department or programme will have a set of expectations for each level according to the particular requirements of your discipline. Make sure that these are neither too demanding nor not demanding enough.

4. Assessment Procedures: Is the level of knowledge, skills and application you are seeking to develop in your students matched by appropriate assessment procedures? Here again, make sure these place the appropriate level of demand on each student for the level of the paper. Consider not just the amount of assessment but its nature and timing. The University's [Guidelines of the Assessment of Student Performance](#) will be helpful and relevant.

Putting together an effective paper takes considerable thought and effort. This document should give you an orientation in how to pitch your new paper at the appropriate level. Your Division will have more detailed guidance on the process of creating a new paper. HEDC and your Associate Deans (Academic and Postgraduate) are available to offer further help if required. Do take advantage of the expertise on offer.