**Annex 3: University Grade Descriptors (Level 6)**

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# **Purpose and Scope**

* 1. The University grade descriptors:

1. set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of a certificate, diploma or degree with a particular classification; and
2. build on the threshold standards set out in Annex 2 and describe the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for a particular classification; and
3. are ‘generic’ because they describe the outcomes and attributes expected from any subject of study for that classification, rather than from any particular subject, and so are applicable across subjects and modes of study.
   1. The University grade descriptors also describe the outcomes and attributes that would demonstrate that a student has not met the expected standard for the award in question.
   2. The University grade descriptors should be used as a guide in writing intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level. They can assist in ensuring that intended learning outcomes should be based not only on content knowledge but also around skills and capabilities, both generic and professional, including technical skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar in English.
   3. The Grade Descriptors should also be used to generate assignment–specific marking schemes and marking criteria that reflect the level of achievement required for individual assessment tasks.
   4. Courses vary in their content and the way students are assessed. A Division may therefore give the different areas of the outcomes in Table 1 different weight for different subjects and courses. For example, numeracy and digital skills may not be as applicable to some arts courses as creativity skills, while the reverse may be the case for some Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses. If some criteria are not applicable to a given course, they may not need to be referenced.

# **The Outcomes**

The outcomes in Tables 1-5 express a holistic view of the outcomes a graduate would be expected to demonstrate for each classification.

* Knowledge and understanding
* Cognitive skills
* Practical skills
* Transferable skills
* Professional competences (where appropriate)

## **Knowledge and Understanding**

**‘Knowledge and understanding’** is defined as a systematic extensive and comparative understanding of key aspects of the field of study, including coherent and detailed knowledge of the subject and critical understanding of theories and concepts, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline (see **Table 1**).

## **Cognitive Skills**

**‘Cognitive skills’** is defined as a conceptual understanding of a level that is necessary to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems and comment on research and scholarship in the discipline, with an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge (see **Table 2**).

## **Practical Skills**

**‘Practical skills’** is defined as an ability to manage one’s individual learning and to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline or as necessary for the discipline (see **Table 3**).

## **Transferable Skills**

**‘Transferable skills’** is defined as personal and enabling skills appropriate to the discipline, including the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences, the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility and decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts (see **Table 4**).

## **Professional Competences**

**‘Professional competences’** (to the extent that they are expressed by the course learning outcomes) covers specific professional requirements and the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature. Where the award of a qualification requires an assessment of professional competencies, no award will be made if a student does not meet them (see **Table 5**).

# **Level 6 Outcomes that a graduate would be expected to demonstrate for each classification in different areas**

**Table 1 Knowledge and understanding**

| **Fail (0-39)** | **3rd (40-49)** | **2.2 (50-59)** | **2.1 (60-69)** | **1st (70-100)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student's knowledge and understanding of the subject is inadequate, without the required breadth or depth, with deficiencies in key areas. | The student has demonstrated a depth of knowledge and understanding in key aspects of their field of study, sufficient to deal with terminology, facts and concepts. | The student has demonstrated a sound breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding, if sometimes balanced towards the descriptive rather than the critical or analytical. | The student has demonstrated sophisticated breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, showing a clear, critical insight. | The student has shown exceptional knowledge and understanding, significantly beyond the threshold expectation of a graduate at this level and beyond what has been taught. |
| The student has demonstrated inadequate understanding of subject- specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, including their limitations and ambiguities. | The student has demonstrated an understanding of subject- specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles. | The student has consistently demonstrated an understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles as well as more specialised areas. | The student has demonstrated a thorough understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles and a sound understanding of more specialised areas. | The student has demonstrated an exceptional understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, and in-depth knowledge, if not mastery of a range of specialised areas. |
| The student has not produced sufficient evidence of background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study. | The student has conducted general background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques, with the ability to extract relevant points. | The student has conducted  background investigation,  analysis, research, enquiry  and/or study using established  techniques accurately, and can critically appraise  academic sources. | The student has conducted  thorough background  investigation, analysis,  research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques  accurately, and possesses a  well-developed ability to  critically appraise a wide  range of sources. | The student has conducted  independent, extensive and appropriate investigation,  analysis, research, enquiry and/or study well beyond the usual range, together with  critical evaluation, to advance work and/or direct arguments. |

**Table 2 Cognitive skills**

| **Fail (0-39)** | **3rd (40-49)** | **2.2 (50-59)** | **2.1 (60-69)** | **1st (70-100)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student has displayed an over-reliance on set sources. They have not demonstrated an adequate ability to select and evaluate reading and research. | The student has demonstrated the ability to select, evaluate and comment on reading, research and primary sources. | The student has selected, evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, sometimes beyond the set range. | The student has thoroughly selected, critically evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, usually beyond the set range. | The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to select, consider, evaluate, comment on and synthesise a broad range of research, primary sources, views and information and integrate references. |
| The student's arguments and explanations are weak and/or poorly constructed, and they are not able to critically evaluate the arguments of others or consider alternative views. | The student has shown the ability to devise and sustain an argument, with some consideration of alternative views, and can explain often complex matters and ideas. | The student has argued logically, with supporting evidence, and has demonstrated the ability to consider and evaluate a range of views and information. They have clearly and consistently explained complex matters and ideas. | The student has demonstrated the ability to make coherent, substantiated arguments, as well as the ability to consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a range of views and information. They have demonstrated a thorough, perceptive and thoughtful interpretation of complex matters and ideas. | The student has made consistent, logical, coherently developed, and substantiated arguments, and demonstrated the ability to systematically consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a wide range of views and information. They have demonstrated sophisticated perception, critical insight and interpretation of complex matters and ideas. |
| The student has shown a limited ability to solve problems and/or make decisions | The student has demonstrated an ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods to do so, and the ability to make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances. | The student has consistently solved complex problems, selecting and applying a range of appropriate methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances. | The student has demonstrated thorough problem-solving skills, selecting and justifying their use of a wide-range of methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances with a degree of autonomy. | The student has demonstrated a wide range of extremely well-developed problem-solving skills, as well as a strong aptitude for decision-making with a high degree of autonomy, in the most complex and unpredictable circumstances. |
| The student has shown little or no real creativity | The student has produced some creative work. | The student has consistently demonstrated creativity. | The student has shown a high level of creativity and originality throughout their work. | The student has demonstrated exceptional creative flair and originality. |

**Table 3 Practical skills**

| **Fail (0-39)** | **3rd (40-49)** | **2.2 (50-59)** | **2.1 (60-69)** | **1st (70-100)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student has not demonstrated sufficient evidence of discipline-specific skills development or application. | The student has demonstrated evidence of developing and applying discipline-specific specialist skills. | The student has consistently demonstrated the development and informed application of discipline-specific specialist skills. | The student has demonstrated a capable and effective application of discipline-specific specialist skills. | The student has demonstrated an accomplished and innovative application of discipline-specific specialist skills. |
| The student has attempted practical tasks/processes but followed a limited, procedural or mechanistic formula, and they contain errors, with little or no independence. | The student has completed practical tasks and/or processes accurately and with a degree of independence. | The student has consistently completed practical tasks/processes mainly independently in an accurate, well-coordinated and proficient way. | The student has performed practical tasks and/or processes autonomously, with accuracy and coordination. | The student has autonomously completed practical tasks and/or processes with a high degree of accuracy, coordination and proficiency. |
| The student has demonstrated a lack of technical, creative and/or artistic skills in most, or key, areas. | The student has demonstrated technical, creative and/or artistic skills. | The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed technical, creative and/or artistic skills. | The student has a thorough command of highly-developed relevant technical, creative and/or artistic skills. | The student has a full range of exceptional technical, creative and/or artistic skills. |
| The student has not presented their research findings clearly or effectively, and their gathering, processing and interpretation of data is unsatisfactory. | The student has presented their research findings, in several formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data effectively. | The student has consistently presented their research findings effectively and appropriately in many formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data efficiently and effectively. | The student has presented thorough research findings perceptively and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively. | The student has presented research findings perceptively, convincingly and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively. |

**Table 4 Transferable skills (including structure and presentation)**

| **Fail (0-39)** | **3rd (40-49)** | **2.2 (50-59)** | **2.1 (60-69)** | **1st (70-100)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student is not able to sufficiently express ideas and convey clear meaning verbally, electronically and/or in writing, uses inaccurate terminology, with many errors in spelling, vocabulary and syntax. They have been unable to demonstrate consistently basic numeracy and digital literacy skills. | The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing, with clear expression and style overall, though there are some errors of vocabulary, syntax, spelling and punctuation. They have also demonstrated numeracy and digital literacy skills. | The student can consistently and confidently communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing. They show a clear, coherent, expressive style, with a range of vocabulary. There may be minor errors of vocabulary, syntax, spelling and punctuation but these should not detract from the overall meaning They have consistently demonstrated strong numeracy and digital literacy skills. | The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions with a high-degree of proficiency verbally, electronically and in writing. They have a clear, fluent and expressive style with appropriate vocabulary and high standards of syntax, spelling and punctuation. They have a high standard of numeracy and digital literacy skills. | The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to an accomplished level verbally, electronically and in writing. They have shown an accurate, fluent, sophisticated style and exhibit excellent standards of syntax, spelling and punctuation. They possess exceptional numeracy and digital literacy skills. |
| The student has made infrequent contributions to group discussions and/or project work. | The student has demonstrated a capability of making useful contributions to group discussions and/or project work. | The student has consistently demonstrated the capability to make coherent and constructive contributions to group discussions and/or project work. | The student has demonstrated the capability to make strong, valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with an understanding of team and leadership roles. | The student has demonstrated the capability to make clear, authoritative and valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with exceptional teamwork and leadership skills. |
| The student has demonstrated little or no ability to manage their learning and/or work without supervision. | The student has shown an ability to manage their learning and work with minimal or no supervision. | The student has consistently shown an ability to systematically manage their learning, and work without supervision. | The student has shown a strong ability to systematically manage their learning, and work without supervision. | The student has shown an exceptional ability to manage their learning on their own initiative, and work without supervision. |
| The student has not demonstrated adequate initiative or personal responsibility. | The student has demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility. | The student has consistently demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility. | The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed initiative and/or personal responsibility. | The student has demonstrated exceptional initiative and/or personal responsibility. |
| The student has shown little or no ability to reflect on their work. | The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect on their work. | The student has consistently demonstrated a well-developed ability to reflect on their work. | The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect critically on their work. | The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to reflect critically and independently on their work. |

**Table 5 Professional competences**

| **Fail (0-39)** | **3rd (40-49)** | **2.2 (50-59)** | **2.1 (60-69)** | **1st (70-100)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student has not demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB). | The student has demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a PSRB. | | | |
| The student has failed to adhere to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry. | The student has adhered to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry. | | | |