

RQF Level Descriptors

The level descriptors are divided into two categories:

- (a) knowledge and understanding; and
- (b) skills.

There is a knowledge descriptor and a skills descriptor for each level within the framework. The descriptors apply to all the qualifications Ofqual regulate, general and vocational, and so many of the descriptors have an “and/or” construction to indicate their applicability to the knowledge and skills associated with the study of a subject or in preparation for a job or role.

The level descriptors build on those used within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Levels 4–8 are intended to be consistent with the five levels within the Framework for Higher Education Qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ).

The descriptors set out the generic knowledge and skills associated with the typical holder of a qualification at that level.

Level	Knowledge descriptor (the holder...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can...)
Entry 1	Progresses along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of knowledge and/or understanding that relate to the subject or immediate environment.	Progress along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of skills that relate to the subject or the immediate environment.
Entry 2	Has basic knowledge or understanding of a subject and/or can carry out simple, familiar tasks; and Knows the steps needed to complete simple activities.	Carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities. Follow instructions or use rehearsed steps to complete tasks and activities.
Entry 3	Has basic knowledge and understanding to carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts; and Knows and understands the steps needed to complete structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts.	Carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts. Be aware of the consequences of actions for self and others.
1	Has basic factual knowledge of a subject and/or knowledge of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined routine tasks and address simple problems; and Is aware of aspects of information relevant to the area of study or work.	Use basic cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined routine tasks and procedures. Select and use relevant information. Identify whether actions have been effective.

Level	Knowledge descriptor (the holder...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can...)
2	<p>Has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems.</p> <p>Can interpret relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems.</p> <p>Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions.</p> <p>Identify how effective actions have been.</p>
3	<p>Has factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to complete tasks and address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Can interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Is aware of the nature of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Is aware of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills, methods and procedures to address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Use appropriate investigation to inform actions.</p> <p>Review how effective methods and actions have been.</p>
4	<p>Has practical, theoretical or technical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Is aware of the nature of approximate scope of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Has an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Identify, adapt and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills to inform actions and address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well-defined.</p> <p>Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results.</p>
5	<p>Has practical, theoretical or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts.</p>	<p>Determine, adapt and use appropriate methods, cognitive and practical skills to address broadly defined, complex problems.</p> <p>Use relevant research or development to inform actions.</p>

Level	Knowledge descriptor (the holder...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can...)
	<p>Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas.</p> <p>Is aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Understands different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.</p>	<p>Evaluate actions, methods and results.</p>
6	<p>Has advanced practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors.</p> <p>Understands different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the theories that underpin them.</p> <p>Can critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and ideas.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Use and, where appropriate, design relevant research and development to inform actions.</p> <p>Evaluate actions, methods and results and their implications.</p>
7	<p>Reformulates and uses practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors.</p> <p>Critically analyses, interprets and evaluates complex information, concepts and theories to produce modified conceptions.</p> <p>Understands the wider contexts in which the area of study or work is located.</p> <p>Understands current developments in the area of study or work.</p> <p>Understands different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Use specialised skills to conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many interacting factors.</p> <p>Determine and use appropriate methodologies and approaches.</p> <p>Design and undertake research, development or strategic activities to inform or produce change in the area of work or study.</p> <p>Critically evaluate actions, methods and results and their short- and long-term implications.</p>

Level	Knowledge descriptor (the holder...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can...)
8	<p>Develops original practical, conceptual or technological understanding to create ways forward in contexts that lack definition and where there are many complex, interacting factors.</p> <p>Critically analyses, interprets and evaluates complex information, concepts and theories to produce new knowledge and theories.</p> <p>Understands and reconceptualises the wider contexts in which the field of knowledge or work is located.</p> <p>Extends a field of knowledge or work by contributing original knowledge and thinking.</p> <p>Exercises critical understanding of different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work.</p>	<p>Use advanced and specialised skills and techniques to conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many complex, interacting factors.</p> <p>Formulate and use appropriate methodologies and approaches.</p> <p>Initiate, design and undertake research, development or strategic activities that extend or produce significant change in the field of work or study.</p> <p>Critically evaluate actions, methods and results and their short- and long-term implications for the field of work or knowledge and its wider context.</p>

Source: *Qualification and Component Levels Requirements and Guidance for All Awarding Organisations and All Qualifications*, Ofqual 2015