

# **10.2**

## **GUIDANCE ON ACADEMIC LEVELS**

# CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## ACADEMIC LEVELS - GUIDANCE NOTE

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Modular structures adopted by Cardiff Metropolitan University recognise and utilise categories of academic demand and attainment denoted by the levels 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (previously known as HE Levels 1, 2, 3, M, and D).
- 1.2 Cardiff Metropolitan University's Modular Programmes Framework, levels 4, 5 and 6 are cited as normally corresponding sequentially to the first, second and third years of an undergraduate degree and Level 7 and 8 normally correspond to work undertaken on a Masters and taught Doctoral programme respectively.
- 1.3 Whilst being a useful start point, the above simple definitions could be interpreted as self fulfilling; they are not particularly helpful to programme designers, examiners and validation panels given that our regulations for modular programmes specify the number of modules at particular levels.
- 1.4 This paper lays down Cardiff Metropolitan University's guidelines in regard to levels. It does not and cannot form a regulatory framework, but is intended to act as a reference for students, programme designers, teachers and assessors of programme material.

### 2 Issues

- 2.1 This guidance note recognises that academic level is not an absolute concept and cannot be defined in absolute terms: it is impossible, for example, to compare in any absolute sense the academic demands of a mathematics programme with those of a fine art programme; they are both demanding, but different.
- 2.2 At the same time, any attempt to ascribe an absolute value for a particular topic within a discipline area may be inappropriate, since "difficulty" has a tendency to relax with time or to be eased by the use of new, alternative approaches.
- 2.3 There is also general acceptance that a topic taken from one subject area at a particular designated level may not warrant the same designated level when transferred to a programme in some other subject area.
- 2.4 It is to be concluded that the academic level is dependent upon how the topic is applied and to what, how it relates to and is integrated with surrounding material, and the level of the learning outcomes which result.

2.5 Notwithstanding the above, it is taken as a matter of principle that introductory or foundation material is not well placed in work designated as being at the higher levels. Consequently, it is to be expected that the work undertaken at levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 should be supported by prior study or experience at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively, though the relationship between progressive levels of study need not necessarily be 'discipline obvious'.

### **3 Modular Considerations**

3.1 A module (regardless of credit value) designated at a particular level may contain material/learning outcomes, which are at a lower level. As a guide to the proportion of lower level work, this guidance note advocates that, exceptionally, a maximum of 40% should be permitted.

3.2 The function of the lower level work is to support the work at the designated module level, filling-up gaps left by support material from other modules.

3.3 Given 2.5, it is anticipated that module descriptions will give guidance as to what support material (in terms of other modules, prior learning, prior experience, etc) might be appropriate for entry. Conversely, it is not anticipated that modules at levels other than at the lowest level will require no such support.

3.4 Further, descriptions of modules should reflect the requirements implied from 2.4 in that they should not only indicate content and assessment which inform as to what is to be taught, learned and understood, but should also describe what learning outcomes are associated with the module to specify the depth of learning.

3.5 Whilst the content of a module might be appropriate to more than one level, giving rise to the possibility of some joint-level teaching, the associated learning outcomes must, from 3.4, be different and thus differentiated in module descriptions. This has consequences for the overall delivery of such modules.

### **4 Level Descriptors**

4.1 Cardiff Metropolitan University has adopted the recommendations and guidance of the Higher Education Wales Credit Specification and Guidance (June 2004) in relation to Generic Level Descriptors and their correlation with the National Qualifications Framework.

4.2 The table below gives guidance in regard to the qualifications levels, which make up the National Qualifications Framework. It shows the correlation between these qualification levels and the commonly used FE and HE levels. For example HE levels 1, 2 and 3 correlate to levels 4, 5 and 6 on the National Qualifications Framework.

## A GUIDE TO THE CREDIT VALUES OF HE QUALIFICATIONS

FHEQ	Qualification Levels
	Doctoral Level 8 Master's Level 7
	Honours Level 6 Intermediate Level 5 Certificate Level 4
NQF	Level 3 Advanced Level 2 Intermediate Level 1 Foundation
HEQF	Entry

EWNI credit levels	FE/HE levels
Level 8 Level 7	Level D Level M
Level 6 Level 5 Level 4	Level HE3 Level HE2 Level HE1
Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	Level FE3 (HE0) Level FE2 Level FE1
Entry	Entry

**TABLE OF GENERIC LEVEL DESCRIPTORS**

	<b>INTELLECTUAL SKILLS and ATTRIBUTES</b>	<b>PROCESSES</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>
<b>Entry Level</b>	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.	Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts. Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable. Undertake the performance of clearly defined roles. Assume a limited change of roles.	Carry out directed activity under close supervision. Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.
<b>1 FE 1</b>	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.	Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts. Utilise a clear choice of routine responses. Co-operate with others.	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.
<b>2 FE 2</b>	Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas. Make comparisons. Interpret available information. Demonstrate a range of skills.	Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which will be non-routine. Co-ordinate with others.	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.
<b>3 FE 3</b>	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.	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.	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 output. Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.

(Adopted by HEFCW from the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System)

<p><b>4</b> <b>HE 1</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>5</b> <b>HE 2</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.</p>
<p><b>6</b> <b>HE 3</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.</p>

<p><b>7</b> <b>M</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity. Design and apply appropriate research methodologies. Communicate results of research to peers.</p>	<p>Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.</p>
<p><b>8</b> <b>Doctoral</b></p>	<p>Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry.</p>	<p>Demonstrate command of methodological issues. Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue.</p>	<p>Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.</p>