

LEVELS DESCRIPTORS: OFQUAL GUIDANCE FOR QUALIFICATIONS

LEVELS DESCRIPTORS: OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCE

Level	Knowledge descriptor	Skills descriptor	Occupational competence	Autonomy and accountability
Level 1	Basic knowledge of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined routine tasks and address simple problems Aware of aspects of information relevant to the area of work or study	Use basic cognitive and practical skills to complete routine tasks and procedures Select and use relevant information Identify whether actions have been effective	Occupational competence which involves the application of knowledge, skills and procedures in the performance of a range of varied work activities which are well defined, routine and predictable Address simple problems	Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures subject to direction or guidance as needed
Level 2	Knowledge and understanding of the facts, procedures and ideas in the occupational field to complete well defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of work or study Interpret relevant information and ideas	Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems. Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions Identify how effective actions have been	Occupational competence which involves the application of knowledge, skills, procedures and ideas in a significant range of varied work activities and contexts which are generally well defined. Some of the activities are complex or non-routine Address straightforward problems	Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures Exercise autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance May collaborate with others perhaps through a work group or team
Level 3	Factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the occupational area to complete tasks and address problems that while well defined may be complex and non-routine Interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas Aware of the nature of the area of work or study Aware of different perspectives or approaches within the area of work or study	Identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills, methods and procedures to complete tasks and address problems that are well defined, may be complex and non-routine Use appropriate investigation to inform actions Review how effective methods and actions have been	Occupational competence which involves the application of knowledge and understanding , skills and methods in a broad range of varied work activities, performed in a variety of contexts most of which are complex and non-routine Address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine	Take responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures including, where relevant, responsibility for supervising or guiding others Exercise responsibility , autonomy and judgement within limited parameters

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<p>Level 4</p>	<p>Practical, theoretical and/or technical knowledge and understanding of the occupational area to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas Aware of the nature and approximate scope of the area of work or study 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 complete work activities, inform actions and address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally well defined Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results</p>	<p>Occupational competence which involves the application of knowledge and understanding, skills and methods in a broad range of complex or technical work activities, performed in a variety of contexts Address problems which are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well defined</p>	<p>Take responsibility for courses of action, including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others and allocation of resources Exercise responsibility, autonomy and judgement within broad but generally well defined parameters</p>
<p>Level 5</p>	<p>Practical, theoretical or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas Aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work Understand different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them</p>	<p>Determine, adapt and use appropriate methods, cognitive and practical skills to complete work activities, inform actions and address broadly defined, complex problems Use relevant research or development to inform actions Evaluate actions, methods and results</p>	<p>Occupational competence which involves the application of theoretical and/or technological knowledge, understanding, skills and methods across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Address broadly defined, complex problems</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others and allocation of resources Exercise responsibility, autonomy and judgement within broad parameters Accountability for the analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation</p>
<p>Level 6</p>	<p>Advanced practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of the subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors Understand different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought</p>	<p>Determine, refine, adapt and use appropriate methods and advanced cognitive and practical skills to complete work activities and address problems that have a limited definition and involve many interacting factors</p>	<p>Occupational competence which involves the application of advanced theoretical and/or technological knowledge, understanding, skills and methods across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts Address problems that have limited definition and involve many interacting factors</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are capable of underpinning substantial changes or development Initiate and lead tasks and processes, taking responsibility where relevant, for the work and</p>

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	<p>and the theories that underpin them</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and ideas</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>		<p>roles of others and the allocation of substantial resources</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy and judgement</p>
Level 7	<p>Reformulate and use practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of the subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and theories to produce modified conceptions</p> <p>Understand the wider context of the in which the area of study or work is located</p> <p>Understand current developments in the area of study or work</p> <p>Understand 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>	<p>Occupational competence which involves the reformulation and application of advanced theoretical and/or technological knowledge, understanding, skills and methods across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts</p> <p>Conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many interacting factors</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that initiate or underpin substantial changes or developments</p> <p>Initiate and lead complex tasks and processes, taking responsibility, where relevant for the work and roles of others and the allocation of substantial resources</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy and judgement across a significant area of work</p>
Level 8	<p>Develop original practical or technological understanding to create ways forward in contexts that lack definition and where there are many complex, interacting factors</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and theories to produce new knowledge and theories</p>	<p>Use advanced and specialised skills and techniques to conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many complex and 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</p>	<p>Occupational competence which involves the origination, reformulation and application of advanced theoretical and/or technological knowledge, understanding, skills and methods across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts</p> <p>Conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many complex interacting factors</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that have a significant impact on the field of work or resolution in substantial organisational or professional change</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy, judgement and leadership as a leading practitioner sharing responsibility for the development</p>

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<p>Understand and reconceptualise the wider context in which the field of knowledge or work is located Extend the field of knowledge or work by contributing original knowledge and thinking Exercise critical understanding of different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work</p>	<p>significant change in the occupation field 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>		<p>of the field of work, or for substantial organisational or professional change Take responsibility for advancement of the occupational field or professional practice</p>
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Steps

- Review the duties and KSBs against the level descriptors for occupational competence and assess which level(s) might apply.
- Then look carefully at the levels immediately above and below this, to evaluate why the occupation does not sit at either of these levels.

Background

The origin of the levels framework used today is the levels 1 to 5 of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) developed in the late 1980s. This was therefore based originally on the level of the occupation. Changes over time have seen a greater emphasis on the level of qualifications based on the degree of difficulty or challenge as opposed to the level of occupational competence in the workplace. For apprenticeship standards, the levels are based on the level of the occupation – ie one occupation links to one apprenticeship standard = one level. This is different from the position with apprenticeship frameworks which were based on qualifications and hence qualification levels. In most cases, frameworks were based on successive levels for the same (or very similar) occupation and hence taken one at a time. However, with standards, the norm will be for an apprentice to begin from scratch and aim (for example) directly for a level 3 occupation.

The descriptors on the right are for occupational competence and for autonomy and accountability. These are based on earlier NVQ/NQF levels and hence on occupations. We have also included the current Ofqual level descriptors on the left. Therefore the occupational profile can be looked at against the columns for occupational competence and accountability on the right and the skills and knowledge can be looked at against the Ofqual descriptors for these on the left.

Level 1 descriptors are included because they provide a reference point for a lower level of occupational competence which is not sufficiently skilled to be an apprenticeship. Level 2 occupations will normally qualify as sufficiently skilled to be an apprenticeship. However, this is not guaranteed in every case, bearing in mind that the Institute's criteria for the required level of skills is based on the need for at least one year's training with 20% of the time off-the-job.

In order to assist with this process, we have marked up in **blue** the words or phrases which are added as the descriptors move up the levels – ie the blue words or phrases in the row for level 2 represent changes from level 1 and so on for each subsequent level. For convenience, the descriptors do not always repeat what is in the next level down before adding content for the higher level.

You should not necessarily expect any given standard to meet the content of the relevant descriptor in full nor expect all of the content of the occupation to be at the same level. However, we would expect the majority of the content of the occupation to meet the descriptors for the level to which the standard is being assigned.