

NQF Level Descriptors

Annexure A

Undergraduate qualifications with an exit at NQF level 5, 6 or 7

HEQSF qualification types (exit level) ¹	Higher Certificate	Advanced Certificate Diploma (240 credit) & (360 credit)	Bachelor's degree (360 credit) Advanced Diploma
HEQSF level	HEQSF level 5	HEQSF level 6	HEQSF level 7
Level descriptors	A student is able to:	A student is able to:	A student is able to:
Scope of knowledge	Demonstrate knowledge of the main areas of one or more fields, disciplines or practices, including an understanding of the key terms, concepts, facts, principles, rules and theories of that field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main areas of one or more fields, disciplines or practices, including an understanding of and an ability to apply the key terms, concepts, facts, principles, rules and theories of that field, discipline or practice. Knowledge of an area or areas of specialisation and how that knowledge relates to other fields, disciplines or practices.	Demonstrate integrated knowledge of the main areas of one or more fields, disciplines or practices, including an understanding of and an ability to apply and evaluate the key terms, concepts, facts, principles, rules and theories of that field, discipline or practice; Demonstrate detailed knowledge of an area or areas of specialisation and how that knowledge relates to other fields, disciplines or practices.
Knowledge literacy	Demonstrate an awareness of how knowledge (or a knowledge system) develops and evolves within the area of study or operation.	Demonstrate an understanding of different forms of knowledge, schools of thought and forms of explanation typical within the area of study or operation, and an awareness of knowledge production processes.	Demonstrate an understanding of knowledge as contested and an ability to evaluate types of knowledge and explanations typical within the area of study or practice.

¹ Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (DHET, 2014)



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HEQSF level	HEQSF level 5	HEQSF level 6	HEQSF level 7
Method & procedure	Demonstrate an ability to select and apply standard methods, procedures, and/or techniques within the field, discipline or practice, and to plan and manage an implementation process within a supported environment.	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate, select and apply appropriate methods, procedures and/or techniques in processes of investigation or application within a defined context.	Demonstrate an understanding of a range of methods of enquiry in a field, discipline or practice, and their suitability to specific investigations; Demonstrate an ability to apply a range of methods to resolve problems or introduce change within a practice.
Problem solving	Demonstrate an ability to identify, evaluate and solve defined, routine and new problems within a familiar context and to apply solutions based on relevant evidence and procedures and/or other forms of explanation appropriate to the field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate an ability to identify, analyse and solve problems in unfamiliar contexts, gathering evidence and applying solutions based on evidence and procedures appropriate to the field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate an ability to identify, analyse, critically reflect on and address complex problems, applying evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments.
Ethics and professional practice	Demonstrate an ability to take account of, and act in accordance with prescribed organisational and professional ethical codes of conduct, values and practices and to seek guidance on ethical and professional issues where necessary.	Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions, within an organisational or professional context, based on an awareness of the complexity of ethical dilemmas.	Demonstrate an ability to take decisions and act ethically and professionally, and the ability to justify these decisions and actions drawing on appropriate ethical values and approaches, within a supported environment.
Accessing, processing and managing information	Demonstrate an ability to gather information from a range of sources, including oral, written and/or symbolic texts, to select information appropriate to the task, and to apply basic processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation on that information.	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate different sources of information; to select information appropriate to the task, and to apply well-developed processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation on that information.	Demonstrate an ability to develop appropriate processes of information gathering for a given context or use; Demonstrate an ability to independently validate the sources of information, and evaluate and manage the information.



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HEQSF level	HEQSF level 5	HEQSF level 6	HEQSF level 7
Producing and communicating information	Demonstrate an ability to communicate information reliably, accurately and coherently, using conventions appropriate to the context, either in writing, verbally or in practical demonstration, including an understanding of and respect for conventions around intellectual property, copyright and plagiarism.	Demonstrate an ability to present and communicate complex information reliably and coherently using appropriate academic/ professional/occupational conventions, formats and technologies for a given context.	Demonstrate an ability to develop and communicate one's own ideas and opinions in well-formed arguments, using appropriate academic, professional, or occupational discourse.
Context and systems	Demonstrate an ability to operate in a range of familiar and new contexts, demonstrating an understanding of different kinds of systems, their constituent parts and the relationships between these parts, and how actions in one area impact on other areas within the same system.	Demonstrate an ability to make decisions and act appropriately in familiar and new contexts, demonstrating an understanding of the relationships between systems, and of how actions, ideas or developments in one system impact on other systems.	Demonstrate an ability to manage processes in unfamiliar and variable contexts, recognising that problem solving is context- and system-bound, and does not occur in isolation.
Management of learning	Demonstrate an ability to assess own and others' performance and to take appropriate action where necessary; an ability to take responsibility for own learning within a structured learning process and to promote the learning of others.	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate performance against given criteria, and accurately identify and address own task-specific learning needs in a given context, and to support the learning needs of others.	Demonstrate an ability to accurately identify, evaluate and address own learning needs in a self-directed manner, and facilitate collaborative learning processes.
Accountability	Demonstrate an ability to answer for own actions, to work effectively with and respect others, and, in a defined context, to take supervisory responsibility for others and for the responsible use of resources where appropriate	Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team or group, and to take responsibility for own decisions and actions and those of others within well-defined contexts, including the responsibility for the use of resources where appropriate.	Demonstrate an ability to take full responsibility for own work, decision making and use of resources and limited accountability for the decisions and actions of others in varied or ill-defined contexts.



Undergraduate qualifications with an exit at NQF level 8 and postgraduate qualifications at NQF level 8-10.

HEQSF qualification types (exit level)	Bachelor's degree (480 credit) (undergraduate) Bachelor Honours degree (postgraduate) Postgraduate Diploma (postgraduate)	Master's degree Professional Master's degree	Doctoral degree Professional Doctorate
HEQSF level	HEQSF level 8	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Level descriptors	A student is able to:	A student is able to:	A student is able to:
Scope of knowledge	Demonstrate knowledge of and engagement in an area at the forefront of a field, discipline or practice; an understanding of the theories, research methodologies, methods and techniques relevant to the field, discipline or practice; and an understanding of how to apply such knowledge in a particular context.	Demonstrate specialist knowledge to enable engagement with and critique of current research or practices, and an advanced scholarship or research in a particular field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate expertise of critical knowledge in an area at the forefront of the field, discipline or practice; and the ability to conceptualise new research initiatives, and create new knowledge or practice.
Knowledge literacy	Demonstrate an ability to interrogate multiple sources of knowledge in an area of specialisation and to evaluate knowledge and processes of knowledge production.	Demonstrate an ability to evaluate current processes of knowledge production and to choose an appropriate process of enquiry for the area of study or practice.	Demonstrate an ability to contribute to scholarly debates around theories of knowledge and processes of knowledge production in an area of study or practice.
Method & procedure	Demonstrate an understanding of the complexities and uncertainties of selecting, applying or transferring appropriate standard procedures, processes or techniques to unfamiliar problems in a specialised field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate a command of and ability to design, select and apply appropriate and creative methods, techniques, processes or technologies to complex practical and theoretical problems.	Demonstrate an ability to develop new methods, techniques, processes, systems or technologies in original, creative and innovative ways appropriate to specialised and complex contexts.



HEQSF qualification types (exit level)	Bachelor's degree (480 credit) (undergraduate) Bachelor Honours degree (postgraduate) Postgraduate Diploma (postgraduate)	Master's degree Professional Master's degree	Doctoral degree Professional Doctorate
HEQSF level	HEQSF level 8	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Problem solving	Demonstrate an ability to use a range of specialised skills to identify, analyse and address complex or abstract problems drawing systematically on the body of knowledge and methods appropriate to a field, discipline or practice.	Demonstrate the use of a wide range of specialised skills in identifying, conceptualising, designing and implementing methods of enquiry to address complex and challenging problems within a field, discipline or practice; and an understanding of the consequences of any solutions or insights generated within a specialised context.	Demonstrate an ability to apply specialist knowledge and theory in critically reflexive, creative and novel ways to address complex practical and theoretical problems.
Ethics and professional practice	Demonstrate an ability to identify and address ethical issues based on critical reflection on the suitability of different ethical value systems to specific contexts.	Demonstrate the ability to make autonomous ethical decisions which affect knowledge production, or complex organisational or professional issues, an ability to critically contribute to the development of ethical standards in a specific context.	Demonstrate an ability to identify, address and manage emerging ethical issues, and to advance processes of ethical decision-making, including monitoring and evaluation of the consequences of these decisions where appropriate.
Accessing, processing and managing information	Demonstrate an ability to critically review information gathering, evaluation and management processes in specialised contexts in order to develop creative responses to problems and issues.	Demonstrate the ability to design and implement a strategy for the processing and management of information, in order to conduct a comprehensive review of leading and current research in an area of specialisation to produce significant insights.	Demonstrate an ability to make independent judgements about managing incomplete or inconsistent information or data in an iterative process of analysis and synthesis, for the development of significant original insights into new complex and abstract ideas, information or issues.



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HEQSF level	HEQSF level 8	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Producing and communicating information	Demonstrate an ability to present and communicate academic, professional or occupational ideas and texts effectively to a range of audiences, offering creative insights, rigorous interpretations and solutions to problems and issues appropriate to the context.	Demonstrate an ability to use the resources of academic and professional or occupational discourses to communicate and defend substantial ideas that are the products of research or development in an area of specialisation; use a range of advanced and specialised skills and discourses appropriate to a field, discipline or practice, to communicate to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge or expertise.	Demonstrate an ability to produce substantial, independent, in-depth and publishable work which meets international standards, is considered to be new or innovative by peers, and makes a significant contribution to the discipline, field, or practice; an ability to develop a communication strategy to disseminate and defend research, strategic and policy initiatives and their implementation to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic and professional or occupational discourse.
Context and systems	Demonstrate an ability to operate effectively within a system, or manage a system based on an understanding of the roles and relationships between elements within the system.	Demonstrate an ability to use occupational discourses to communicate and defend substantial ideas that are the products of research or development in an area of specialisation; use a range of advanced and specialised skills and discourses appropriate to a field, discipline or practice, to communicate to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge or expertise.	Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical underpinnings in the management of complex systems to achieve systemic change; an ability to independently design, sustain and manage change within a system or systems.



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HEQSF level	HEQSF level 8	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Management of learning	Demonstrate an ability to apply, in a self-critical manner, learning strategies which effectively address his or her professional and ongoing learning needs and the professional and ongoing learning needs of others.	Demonstrate an ability to develop own learning strategies which sustain independent learning and academic or professional development, and can interact effectively within the learning or professional group as a means of enhancing learning.	Demonstrate intellectual independence, research leadership and management of research and research development in a discipline, field or practice.
Accountability	Demonstrate an ability to take full responsibility for his or her work, decision-making and use of resources, and full accountability for the decisions and actions of others where appropriate.	Demonstrate an ability to operate independently and take full responsibility for his or her own work, and, where appropriate, to account for leading and initiating processes and implementing systems, ensuring good resource management and governance practices.	Demonstrate an ability to operate independently and take full responsibility for his or her work, and where appropriate to lead, oversee and be held ultimately accountable for the overall governance of processes and systems.

