

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT HANDBOOK

Chapter 4 - Generic University Assessment Criteria for Taught Programmes: Guidance notes for staff

Introduction

The assessment criteria below characterise the level of complexity, demand and relative autonomy expected of your students at each level of the curriculum. The 'by level' structure maps to the [Regulated Qualifications Framework](#) (RQF) curriculum levels, and is underpinned by the need for your students to progress from one level to the next. These criteria draw on QAA¹ and SEEC² guidelines,

How should the generic criteria be used?

These criteria are designed to be a reference point for assessment criteria in your subject area. Where the generic criteria are deemed by subject leaders to be sufficient, they can be used directly for assessing students' learning in that subject. Subject groups are encouraged to use the generic criteria as a basis for evaluating and developing their own, more subject-specific criteria for each level of their own taught curriculum. This is particularly appropriate for numeracy-based STEMM subject areas. In addition, you may well need more specialised criteria for particular forms of assessment, for example oral and group assessments. The [Academic Development Team](#) can provide examples of these, and can help you to develop them in ways appropriate for your subject.

The generic criteria can also help guide you in writing Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) at each level of the curriculum, including those needed for programme specifications and module descriptors. On a programme overall, students should be able to demonstrate achievement at the appropriate level across the different descriptor categories, including those described as 'skills for life and employment'. The generic criteria can therefore help guide you in the design of your programmes.

There should be a logical relationship between your module's ILOs and the criteria used for assessing student learning on that module, at that level of the curriculum.

Applying the ‘best fit’ principle

Generic descriptors can provide only broadly based guidance for assessment. A useful principle when using them is to look for the ‘best fit’ band. For example, a student assignment may display one or two of the characteristics in the 70–85% band and most of those in the 60–69% band, but may not quite achieve the standard of the 60–69% band in one or two areas. The best fit in that case is likely to be within the 60–69% band. You should also bear in mind that a single student assignment is unlikely to be complex enough to meet all of the stated criteria for a given level of attainment, so there does not need to be evidence for every descriptor in a band in order for a student to gain marks in that band: the ‘best fit’ principle applies. Having achieved the full degree award at a given level, however, students should have been able to demonstrate learning at the appropriate level in all of the categories: knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, use of research-informed literature, and skills for life and employment. Subject specialists are best placed to translate the generic descriptors into subject-specific language and details for a given topic and form of assessment.

¹ [QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#)

² [SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education](#)

Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF Level 3

Knowledge & Understanding of Subject	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Largely inaccurate or irrelevant material. Little or no evidence of factual and conceptual understanding of the subject, or of reading/research.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Shows an insufficient level of factual and conceptual understanding of the subject. Little or no evidence of reading/research beyond a partial reproduction of information gained through class contact.
40-49% (3rd) PASS	Threshold level. Has developed a basic level of factual and conceptual understanding of the subject. Reading/research is limited to that gained through class contact.
50-59% (2.2)	Some evidence that understanding has been enhanced through wider reading, but is still limited to basic texts.
60-69% (2.1) MERIT	Has developed a sound understanding of the subject appropriate to this level. There is evidence of wider reading which goes beyond that gained from Module Convener contact.
70-85% (1st) DISTINCTION	Has developed a broad factual and conceptual understanding of the subject relative to the level through extensive reading.
86%-100%(1st) DISTINCTION	Has developed an exceptionally broad factual and conceptual understanding of the subject relative to the level through extensive reading.

Cognitive/Intellectual Skills	
(e.g. analysis and synthesis; logic and argument; analytical reflection; organisation and communication of ideas and evidence)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	No evidence of analysis. Unsubstantiated opinions.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Work is entirely or almost entirely descriptive, showing little or no evidence of analysis. Has accepted information uncritically. Unsubstantiated opinions usually present.
40-49% (3rd) PASS	There is some evidence of analysis and evaluation, but work is mainly descriptive with an uncritical acceptance of information, and unsubstantiated opinions may be evident. Lack of logical development of an argument.
50-59% (2.2)	Better understanding of the subject has enabled the student to analyse information using simple logic. On balance the work is still descriptive.
60-69% (2.1) MERIT	Intelligent attempt at analysing and evaluating information. Well argued with appropriate amount of evidence, substantiated opinions are given.
70-85% (1st) DISTINCTION	Has analysed and evaluated information using defined techniques & principles. Can collate and categorise ideas and information and can select what is relevant to support analysis and evaluation and develop a coherent argument, appropriate to the level of development. Has developed an early critical approach to information.
86%-100%(1st) DISTINCTION	Has an exceptional ability to analyse and evaluate information. Able to collate, categorise ideas and information with fluency and insight. Capable of developing and sustaining a coherent argument that is exceptional for this level of development. Has developed a critical approach to information.

Use of Research-informed Literature	
(including referencing, appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	No evidence of ability to relate theory to practice.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Little or no evidence of ability to relate theory to practice. Little or no reference to research-informed literature.
40-49% (3rd PASS)	Threshold level. Shows a limited understanding of the application of research-informed literature or attempt to apply knowledge across situations. Responses may not be meaningful.
50-59% (2.2)	Reasonable attempt to apply understanding of the application of research-informed literature to other contexts. Responses start to be meaningful.
60-69% (2.1 MERIT)	Is able to apply knowledge of research-informed literature to different contexts and generate a range of responses to given situations.
70-85% (1st DISTINCTION)	Can generate a range of appropriate responses to given problems, some of which may be innovative; good reference to and application of research -informed literature.
86%-100%(1st DISTINCTION)	Can generate a range of effective responses to given problems, some of which may demonstrate innovation and considerable insight that are unusual at this level; exceptionally good reference to and application of research -informed literature.

Skills for Life and Employment	
(e.g. Research-related skills; written, graphical and oral communication skills; numeracy; group working; problem-solving; practical and professional skills)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Unstructured and/or incoherent. Markedly poor English and/or very inappropriate style. Citations and bibliography incorrectly given or missing. May be seriously deficient in quantity. No qualities and transferable skills required for employment are demonstrated.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Structure is very weak or lacking. Material is incoherent. Serious or extensive mistakes in grammar or syntax. Very immature style. Demonstrates 1 or 2 qualities and transferable skills required for employment.
40-49% (3rd) PASS	Threshold level. Structure is weak and/or inconsistent and lacking in sequential development. Mistakes in grammar or syntax. Immature style. Citations and bibliography poorly or inconsistently presented. Demonstrates few qualities and transferable skills required for employment.
50-59% (2.2)	Structure lacks coherence and mistakes in presentation are evident. Demonstrates some qualities and transferable skills required for employment.
60-69% (2.1) MERIT	Structure is coherent and logical showing progression to the argument. There are few mistakes in presentation or citation. Demonstrates qualities and transferable skills required for employment.
70-85% (1st) DISTINCTION	Well-organised presentation which develops flow and progression in a well-structured argument. Syntax/grammar indicates an appropriate level of maturity.

	Demonstrates a broad range of qualities and transferable skills required for employment.
86%-100%(1st) DISTINCTION	Exceptionally well-organised presentation which develops flow and progression in a well-structured argument. Syntax and grammar indicate a high level of maturity. Demonstrates an excellent range of qualities and transferable skills required for employment.

See [Annex 1](#) to download Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF at Level 3.

Generic Criteria for Assessment at RQF Level 4

Knowledge & Understanding of Subject	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Major gaps in knowledge and understanding. Significant inaccuracies.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Gaps in knowledge and superficial understanding. Some inaccuracies.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Broadly accurate knowledge and understanding of the material. Some elements missing and flaws evident.
50-59% (2.2)	Sound, routine knowledge and understanding of the material, main concepts and key theories. Some flaws may be evident.
60-69% (2.1)	Good, consistent knowledge and understanding of the material, main concepts and key theories at this level.
70-85% (1st)	Detailed knowledge and understanding of the main concepts/ theories at this level. Beginning to show awareness of the limitations of the knowledge base.
86%- 100%(1st)	Highly detailed knowledge and understanding of material, concepts and theories at this level. Awareness of the ambiguities and limitations of knowledge.

Cognitive/Intellectual Skills	
(e.g. analysis and synthesis; logic and argument; analytical reflection; organisation and communication of ideas and evidence)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Brief and irrelevant. Descriptive. Only personal views offered. Unsubstantiated generalisations. Little or no attempt to draw conclusions
26 -39% (FAIL)	For the most part descriptive. Views/ findings sometimes illogical or contradictory. Generalisations/ statements made with scant evidence. Conclusions lack relevance and/or validity
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Some awareness of issues. Sense of argument emerging though not completely coherent. Some evidence to support views, but not always consistent. Some relevant conclusions
50-59% (2.2)	Issues identified within given areas. An emerging awareness of different stances and ability to use evidence to support a coherent argument. Broadly valid conclusions.
60-69% (2.1)	Good analytical ability. Acknowledgement of views of others. Arguments generally logical, coherently expressed, well organised and supported. Sound conclusions.
70-85% (1st)	Very good analysis throughout. Perceptive and persuasive points made within given area. Explicit acknowledgement of other stances. Arguments well- articulated, and logically developed with a range of evidence. Strong conclusions.
86%- 100%(1st)	Logical, articulate analysis a consistent feature. Persuasive points made throughout the work within a highly articulate, balanced argument. Judiciously selected evidence, drawn from relevant research. Convincing conclusions

Use of Research-informed Literature	
(including referencing, appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	No evidence of reading. Views are unsupported and non- authoritative. Academic conventions largely ignored.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Evidence of little reading appropriate for the level of study, and/or indiscriminate use of sources. Academic conventions used weakly.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Some evidence of reading, with superficial linking to given text(s). Some academic conventions evident and largely consistent, but with some weaknesses
50-59% (2.2)	Knowledge of literature beyond core text(s). Literature used accurately but descriptively. Academic skills generally sound.
60-69% (2.1)	Knowledge of the field of literature appropriately used to support views. Research-informed literature integrated into the work. Good use of academic conventions.
70-85% (1st)	Critical engagement with appropriate reading. Knowledge of research-informed literature embedded in the work. Consistently accurate use of academic conventions.
86%- 100%(1st)	Exceptionally wide range of relevant literature used critically to inform argument, balance discussion and/or inform problem-solving. Consistently accurate and assured use of academic conventions.

Graduate Skills for Life and Employment	
(e.g. Research-related skills; written, graphical and oral communication skills; numeracy; group working; problem-solving; practical and professional skills)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Little or no evidence of the required skills in any of the skills areas.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Limited evidence of skills in the range identified for the assessment at this level. Significant weaknesses evident, which suggest that the candidate is not on course to gain skills necessary for graduate-level employment.
40-49% (3rd)	Research skills: Some evidence of ability to collect appropriate data/ information and undertake straightforward research tasks with external guidance. Can communicate in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s), but with evident weaknesses. Can work effectively with others as a member of a group, and meet most obligations to others (e.g. Module Convener and peers). Some evidence of ability to apply methods appropriately to address a well-defined problem . Able to recognise own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills identified by others, but lacking insight in some areas.
50-59% (2.2)	Research skills: Can collect and interpret appropriate data/ information and undertake straightforward research tasks with external guidance. Can communicate effectively in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work effectively with others as a member of a group, and meet obligations to others (e.g. Module Convener and peers). Can apply methods accurately to address a well-defined problem , and begin to appreciate the complexity of the issues in the discipline.

	Able to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills identified by others.
60-69% (2.1)	Research skills: Can collect and interpret appropriate data/ information and successfully undertake straightforward research tasks with limited external guidance. Can communicate well and consistently in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work very effectively with others as a member of a group, and meet all obligations to others (e.g. Module Convener and peers). Can apply methods accurately to address a well-defined problem, appreciating the complexity of the issues in the discipline. Able to take initiative in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills identified by others.
70-85% (1st)	Research skills: Can collect and interpret appropriate data and successfully undertake research tasks with a degree of autonomy. Can communicate very effectively in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work very effectively with others as a member of a group, showing leadership skills where appropriate, and meet all obligations to others (e.g. Module Convener and peers). Can apply methods accurately and very effectively to address a well-defined problem, appreciating the complexity of the issues in the discipline. Able to show insight and autonomy in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills.
86%- 100%(1st)	Research skills: Can collect and interpret appropriate data/ information and undertake research tasks with autonomy and exceptional success. Can communicate highly effectively in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work exceptionally well with others as a key member of a group, showing leadership skills where appropriate, negotiating and meeting all obligations to others (e.g. Module Convener and peers).

	Can apply methods accurately and highly effectively to address a well-defined problem, appreciating the complexity of a range of issues in the discipline. Able to show insight and autonomy in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills.
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See [Annex 2](#) to download Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF at Level 4.

Generic Criteria for Assessment at RQF Level 5

Knowledge & Understanding of Subject	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Major gaps in knowledge and understanding of material at this level. Significant inaccuracies.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Gaps in knowledge and only superficial understanding of the well-established principles of area(s) of study. Some inaccuracies.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Some knowledge and understanding of material, of well-established principles of area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have been developed.
50-59% (2.2)	Broad knowledge and understanding of material, of well-established principles of area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have been developed
60-69% (2.1)	Very good knowledge and understanding of material, of well-established principles of area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have been developed.
70-85% (1st)	Very good, detailed knowledge and understanding of material, main concepts/theories at this level. Awareness of the limitation of their knowledge, and how this influences any analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.
86%- 100%(1st)	Exceptional knowledge and understanding of material, main concepts/theories at this level. Awareness of the limitation of their knowledge, and how this influences any analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Cognitive/Intellectual Skills	
(e.g. analysis and synthesis; logic and argument; analytical reflection; organisation and communication of ideas and evidence)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Unsubstantiated generalizations, made without use of any credible evidence. Lack of logic, leading to unsupportable conclusions or missing conclusions. Lack of analysis and relevance.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Views/ findings largely irrelevant, illogical or contradictory. Generalisations/ statements made with scant evidence. Conclusions lack relevance and/or validity.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Awareness of main issues. Structure of argument effective, but with some gaps or weaknesses. Some evidence provided to support findings, but not always consistent. Some relevant conclusions.
50-59% (2.2)	Issues identified and critically analysed within given areas. An awareness of different stances and ability to use evidence to support argument. Ability to apply concepts and principles outside context of study context. Generally sound conclusions.
60-69% (2.1)	Good level of analysis and synthesis. An awareness of different stances and ability to use evidence convincingly to support argument. Ability to apply concepts/ principles effectively beyond context of study. Valid conclusions.
70-85% (1st)	Excellent analysis and synthesis. A range of perceptive points made within given area for this level of study. Arguments logically developed, supported by a range of relevant evidence. Explicit acknowledgement of other stances. Strong conclusions.
86%- 100%(1st)	Exceptional analysis and synthesis are consistent features. Perceptive, logically connected points made throughout the work within an eloquent, balanced argument. Evidence selected judiciously and thoroughly analysed. Persuasive conclusions.

Use of Research-informed Literature	
(including referencing, appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	No evidence of reading. Views are unsupported and non- authoritative. Academic conventions largely ignored.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Evidence of little reading appropriate for this level and/or indiscriminate use of sources. Academic conventions used weakly.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Evidence of reading relevant sources, with some appropriate linking to given text(s). Academic conventions evident and largely consistent, with minor weaknesses.
50-59% (2.2)	Knowledge and analysis of a range of literature beyond core text(s). Literature used accurately and analytically. Academic skills generally sound.
60-69% (2.1)	Knowledge of the field of literature used consistently to support findings. Research-informed literature integrated into the work. Very good use of academic conventions.
70-85% (1st)	Critical engagement with a range of reading. Knowledge of research-informed literature embedded in the work. Consistently accurate use of academic conventions.
86%- 100%(1st)	Exceptionally wide range of relevant literature evaluated and used critically to inform argument, balance discussion and/or inform problem-solving. Consistently accurate and assured use of academic conventions.

Graduate Skills for Life and Employment	
(e.g. Research-related skills; written, graphical and oral communication skills; numeracy; group working; problem-solving; practical and professional skills)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Little or no evidence of the required skills in any of the areas identified for assessment at this level.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Limited evidence of skills in the range identified for assessment at this level. Significant weaknesses evident, which suggest that the candidate is not yet on course to gain skills necessary for graduate-level employment.
40-49% (3rd)	Research skills: Some evidence of ability to collect and interpret appropriate data/ information and undertake research tasks with limited external guidance. Can communicate in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s), but with some weaknesses. Can work with others as a member of a group, meeting most obligations to others, modifying responses appropriately. Can identify key areas of problems and generally choose appropriate methods for their resolution. Able to recognise own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills, but with limited insight in some areas.
50-59% (2.2)	Research skills: Can undertake research-like tasks, drawing on a range of sources, with limited external guidance. Can communicate effectively and confidently in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work effectively with others as a member of a group, meeting obligations to others, modifying responses appropriately. Can identify key areas of problems and choose appropriate methods for their resolution in a considered manner. Able to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills, and to develop own evaluation criteria

60-69% (2.1)	Research skills: Can successfully complete research-like tasks, drawing on a range of sources, with limited external guidance. Can communicate well, confidently and consistently in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work very effectively and confidently with others as a member of a group, meeting obligations to others, modifying responses appropriately. Can identify key areas of problems and choose, with autonomy, appropriate methods for their resolution in a considered manner. Able to take initiative in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses in relation to professional and practical skills identified by others and develop and effectively apply own evaluation criteria.
70-85% (1st)	Research skills: Can successfully complete research-like tasks, drawing on a range of sources, with a significant degree of autonomy. Can communicate very effectively and confidently in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work very effectively and confidently with others as a member of a group, showing leadership skills where appropriate, and meet all obligations to others. Can identify key areas of problems confidently and choose, with autonomy and notable effectiveness, appropriate methods for their resolution in a considered manner. Able to show insight and autonomy in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses re professional and practical skills, showing excellent judgement
86%- 100%(1st)	Research skills: Evidence of exceptional success in undertaking a range of research-like tasks with high degree of autonomy for the level. Can communicate highly effectively, with professionalism, in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate to the discipline(s). Can work exceptionally well with others as a key member of a group, showing leadership skills where appropriate, negotiating and meeting all obligations to others. Can identify key areas of problems confidently and choose, with autonomy and exceptional effectiveness, appropriate methods for their resolution in a

	considered manner. Able to show insight and autonomy in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses , showing outstanding judgement.
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See [Annex 3](#) to download Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF at Level 5.

Generic Criteria for Assessment at RQF Level 6

(Bachelor's degree with Honours)

Knowledge & Understanding of Subject	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Major gaps in knowledge and understanding of material at this level. Substantial inaccuracies.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Gaps in knowledge, with only superficial understanding. Some significant inaccuracies.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Understanding of key aspects of field of study; coherent knowledge, at least in part informed by current research in the subject discipline.
50-59% (2.2)	Systematic understanding of field(s) of study, as indicated by relevant QAA subject benchmark statements for the degree programme.
60-69% (2.1) MERIT	Good understanding of the field(s) of study; coherent knowledge, in line with subject benchmark, at least in part informed by current research in the subject discipline.
70-85% (1st)	Excellent knowledge and understanding of the main concepts and key theories/ concepts of the discipline(s). Clear awareness of the limitations of the knowledge base
86%- 100%(1st)	Highly detailed knowledge and understanding of the main theories/concepts of the discipline(s), and an awareness of the ambiguities and limitations of knowledge.

Cognitive/Intellectual Skills	
(e.g. analysis and synthesis; logic and argument; analytical reflection; organisation and communication of ideas and evidence)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Unsubstantiated generalizations, made without use of any credible evidence. Lack of logic, leading to unsupportable/ missing conclusions. Lack of any attempt to analyse, synthesise or evaluate. Poor communication of ideas.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Some evidence of analytical intellectual skills, but for the most part descriptive. Ideas/findings sometimes illogical and contradictory. Generalized statements made with scant evidence. Conclusions lack relevance.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. Evidence of some logical, analytical thinking and some attempts to synthesise, albeit with some weaknesses. Some evidence to support findings/ views, but evidence not consistently interpreted. Some relevant conclusions.
50-59% (2.2)	Evidence of some logical, analytical thinking and synthesis. Can analyse new and/or abstract data and situations without guidance. An emerging awareness of different stances and ability to use evidence to support the argument. Valid conclusions
60-69% (2.1)	Sound, logical, analytical thinking; synthesis and evaluation. Ability to devise and sustain persuasive arguments, and to review the reliability, validity & significance of evidence. Ability to communicate ideas and evidence accurately and convincingly. Sound, convincing conclusions.
70-85% (1st)	Thoroughly logical work, supported by judiciously selected and evaluated evidence. High quality analysis, developed independently or through effective collaboration.

	Ability to investigate contradictory information and identify reasons for contradictions. Strong conclusions.
86%- 100%(1st)	Exceptional work; judiciously selected and evaluated evidence. Very high quality analysis, developed independently or through effective collaboration. Ability to investigate contradictory information and identify reasons for contradictions. Highly persuasive conclusions.

Use of Research-informed Literature	
(including referencing, appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Little evidence of reading. Views and findings unsupported and non-authoritative. Academic conventions largely ignored.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Evidence of little reading and/or of reliance on inappropriate sources, and/or indiscriminate use of sources. Academic conventions used inconsistently.
40-49% (3rd)	Threshold level. References to a range of relevant sources. Some omissions and minor errors. Academic conventions evident and largely consistent, with minor lapses.
50-59% (2.2)	Knowledge, analysis and evaluation of a range of research-informed literature, including sources retrieved, analysed independently. Academic skills consistently applied.
60-69% (2.1)	Knowledge, analysis and evaluation of a range of research-informed literature, including sources retrieved, analysed independently with accuracy and assurance. Good academic skills, consistently applied.
70-85% (1st)	Excellent knowledge of research informed literature embedded in the work. Consistent analysis and evaluation of sources. High-level academic skills consistently applied.
86%- 100%(1st)	Outstanding knowledge of research-informed literature embedded in the work. Consistent analysis and evaluation of sources. High-level academic skills consistently and professionally applied.

Graduate Skills for Life and Employment	
(e.g. Research-related skills; written, graphical and oral communication skills; numeracy; group working; problem-solving; practical and professional skills)	
0-25% (WEAK FAIL)	Little or no evidence of the required skills in any of the graduate skills identified in the programme specification at this level.
26 -39% (FAIL)	Limited evidence of the graduate skills identified in the programme specification. Significant weaknesses evident, which suggest that the candidate has not gained the skills necessary for graduate-level employment.
40-49% (3rd)	Research skills: Can competently undertake reasonably straightforward research tasks with minimum guidance, but with minor weaknesses. Can communicate in a range of formats, including orally, at a standard appropriate for graduate-level employment, and with limited weaknesses. Can generally work effectively within a team, negotiating in a professional manner and managing conflict. Is largely confident and effective in identifying and defining complex problems and applying knowledge and methods to their solution. Able to recognise own strengths and weaknesses in relation to graduate employment, with minor areas of weakness.
50-59% (2.2)	Research skills: Can competently undertake reasonably straightforward research tasks with minimum guidance. Can communicate effectively in a range of formats, including orally, at a standard appropriate for graduate-level employment, and with limited weaknesses. Can consistently work effectively within a team, negotiating in a professional manner and managing conflict. Is confident and flexible in identifying and defining complex problems and applying knowledge and methods to their solution.

	Able to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses in relation to graduate employment.
60-69% (2.1)	Research skills: Can successfully complete a range of research-like tasks, including evaluation, with very limited external guidance. Can communicate well, confidently and consistently in a range of formats, including orally, at a standard appropriate for graduate-level employment. Can consistently work very well within a team, leading & negotiating in a professional manner and managing conflict. Is confident and flexible in identifying and defining a range of complex problems and applying knowledge and methods to their solution. Able to take initiative in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses in relation to graduate-level professional and practical skills, and act autonomously to develop new areas of skills as necessary.
70-85% (1st)	Research skills: Can very successfully complete a range of research-like tasks, including evaluation, with a significant degree of autonomy. Can communicate professionally and confidently in a range of formats, at a high standard appropriate for graduate-level employment. Can work professionally within a team, showing leadership skills as appropriate, managing conflict and meeting obligations. Is professional and flexible in autonomously identifying and defining a range of complex problems and applying knowledge and methods to their solution. Able to show insight and autonomy in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses and developing professional and practical skills needed for graduate-level employment.
86%- 100%(1st)	Research skills: Exceptionally successful in a wide range of research-like tasks, including evaluation, with a high degree of autonomy. Can communicate with an exceptionally high level of professionalism, in a range of formats, including orally, appropriate for graduate-level employment. Can work exceptionally well and professionally within a team, showing leadership skills as appropriate, managing conflict, and meeting all

	obligations. Is exceptionally professional and flexible in autonomously defining and solving a range of complex problems and applying knowledge and methods to their solution. Outstanding ability to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses, showing outstanding attributes for graduate-level employment.
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See [Annex 4](#) to download Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF at Level 6.

Generic Criteria for Assessment for RQF Level 7

(Masters Programmes)

Knowledge & Understanding of Subject	
0-39 (Fail)	Demonstrates little knowledge or understanding of the field. Demonstrates significant weaknesses in the knowledge base, and/or simply reproduces knowledge without evidence of understanding.
40-49 (Fail)	Demonstrates knowledge of the field and awareness of current evidence and issues, but with some notable weaknesses. Lacks knowledge and understanding of some key areas.
50-59 (Pass)	Demonstrates a sound knowledge and understanding of material within a specialised field of study. Demonstrates an understanding of current theoretical and methodological approaches and how these affect the way the knowledge base is interpreted.
60-69 (Merit)	Produces work with a well-defined focus. Demonstrates a systematic knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.
70-85 (Distinction)	Produces work of exceptional standard, reflecting outstanding knowledge and understanding of material. Displays exceptional mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, with an exceptional critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights at the forefront of the field.
86-100 (Distinction)	This work meets and often exceeds the standard for distinction, as described in the 70-85 band, across all sub-categories of criteria: knowledge and understanding of subject; cognitive skills; research skills; use of research-informed literature; and skills for life and professional employment. This work is of publishable quality, with only very minor amendments, and

	would be likely to receive that judgement if submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Work is of such a quality that the student is clearly highly capable of doctoral research in the discipline and, in principle, should be prioritised for a postgraduate research grant.
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Cognitive/Intellectual Skills	
(e.g. analysis and synthesis; logic and argument; analytical reflection; organisation and communication of ideas and evidence)	
0-39 (Fail)	Very little or no critical ability. Poor, inconsistent analysis.
40-49 (Condonable Fail)	Some appropriate analysis, but some significant inconsistencies which affect the soundness of argument and/or conclusions. Demonstrates very limited critical ability.
50-59 (Pass)	Provides evidence of relevant and sound analysis within the specialised area, with some ability to evaluate critically. Is able to analyse complex issues and make appropriate judgements.
60-69 (Merit)	Is able to evaluate methodologies critically and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses. Is able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, making sound judgements in the absence of complete data.
70-85 (Distinction)	Shows outstanding ability to evaluate methodologies critically and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses. Is able to deal with a range of complex issues both systematically and creatively, making excellent judgements in the absence of complete data.
86-100 (Distinction)	This work meets and often exceeds the standard for distinction, as described in the 70-85 band, across all sub-categories of criteria: knowledge and understanding of subject; cognitive skills; research skills; use of research-informed literature; and skills for life and professional employment. This work is of publishable quality, with only very minor amendments, and would be likely to receive that judgement if submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Work is of such a quality that the student is clearly highly capable of

	doctoral research in the discipline and, in principle, should be prioritised for a postgraduate research grant.
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Research Skills - Use of Research-informed Literature	
(including referencing, appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty)	
0-39 (Fail)	Demonstrates little or no skill in selected techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Lacks any understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge. Failure to evidence or discuss/apply appropriate examples of literature relating to current research and advanced scholarship in the field. References to literature/ evidence and use of academic conventions are flawed, and/or inconsistent. Argument absent, or lacking any clarity and/or logic.
40-49 (Condonable Fail)	Demonstrates some skill in selected techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship, but with significant areas of weakness. Lacks sufficient understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge. Can evidence and discuss/apply examples of literature relating to current research but lacks critical engagement. References to appropriate literature/ evidence and use of academic conventions are insufficient and/or inconsistent. Argument is attempted, but lacks in clarity and/or logic.
50-59 (Pass)	Demonstrates understanding of and skills in selected techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Shows some originality in the application of knowledge, and some understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline. Can evaluate critically examples of literature relating to current research and advanced scholarship in the field. Makes consistently sound use of appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty. Able to communicate argument, evidence and conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

60-69 (Merit)	Displays a comprehensive understanding of and skills in techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Shows originality in the application of knowledge, together with a good understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline. Is able to evaluate critically a range of literature relating to current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline. Makes consistently good use of appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty. Able to communicate very effectively arguments, evidence and conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
70-85 (Distinction)	Employs advanced skills to conduct research and, where appropriate, advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision making. Displays an exceptional grasp of techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Shows originality in application of knowledge, and excellent understanding of how established techniques of enquiry create and interpret knowledge in the discipline. Is able to evaluate critically, with exceptional insight, a range of literature relating to current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline. Makes consistently excellent use of appropriate academic conventions and academic honesty. Able to communicate at a very high level arguments, evidence and conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
86-100 (Distinction)	This work meets and often exceeds the standard for distinction, as described in the 70-85 band, across all sub-categories of criteria: knowledge and understanding of subject; cognitive skills; research skills; use of research-informed literature; and skills for life and professional employment. This work is of publishable quality, with only very minor amendments, and would be likely to receive that judgement if submitted to a peer-reviewed

	journal. Work is of such a quality that the student is clearly highly capable of doctoral research in the discipline and, in principle, should be prioritised for a postgraduate research grant.
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Skills for Life and Professional Employment	
(e.g. Research-related skills; written, graphical and oral communication skills; numeracy; group working; problem-solving; practical and professional skills)	
0-39 (Fail)	Significant weaknesses evident in key areas such as communication, problem-solving and project management. Inability to adapt. Inability to work flexibly, independently and/or as part of a team.
40-49 (Condonable Fail)	Demonstrates generally effective employability skills, including communication and problem-solving, but with some problematic areas of weakness. Limited ability to adapt. Ability to work flexibly, independently and/or as part of a team, but with areas of weakness.
50-59 (Pass)	Shows a consistently good level of employability skills, including team working, project management, IT/computer literacy, creativity and flexibility. Demonstrates capabilities to support effective communication in a range of complex and specialised contexts. Shows consistent ability in tackling and solving demanding problems Can plan and direct own learning. Demonstrates ability to advance own knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills. Demonstrates the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
60-69 (Merit)	Shows a high level of employability skills, including team working, project management, IT/computer literacy, creativity and flexibility. Demonstrates very effective communication in a range of complex and specialised contexts. Demonstrates self-direction and some originality in tackling and solving demanding problems.

	Can act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level. Demonstrates the skills and attitudes needed to advance own knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills. Demonstrates the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
70-85 (Distinction)	Shows a very high level of employability skills, including team working/leadership, project management, IT/computer literacy, creativity and flexibility. Demonstrates very high level communication skills in a range of complex contexts, and ability to write at publishable standard. Demonstrates autonomy and notable originality in tackling and solving demanding problems. Shows a high level of consistency and autonomy in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level. Demonstrates the skills and attitudes needed to advance own knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level. Demonstrates the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
86-100 (Distinction)	This work meets and often exceeds the standard for distinction, as described in the 70-85 band, across all sub-categories of criteria: knowledge and understanding of subject; cognitive skills; research skills; use of research-informed literature; and skills for life and professional employment. This work is of publishable quality, with only very minor amendments, and would be likely to receive that judgement if submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Work is of such a quality that the student is clearly highly capable of doctoral research in the discipline and, in principle, should be prioritised for a postgraduate research grant.

See [Annex 5](#) to download Generic Criteria for Assessment RQF at Level 7.