

# Learning Outcomes

## Levels (2 of 3)

### Overview

One of the **most common reasons for modules to be referred** for further development is that their learning outcomes are not appropriate for the level of study, especially between level H and M.

Credit level descriptors

(i) “define the **level of challenge, complexity, and autonomy** expected of a learner” (SEEC: 1)

(ii) provide a “statement of the **generic characteristics of outcomes** of learning at **specific levels**” (QAA: 1-2)

(iii) should be a **starting point** in regards to the **creation of learning outcomes**

on successful completion of a unit, module or programme of study.

### Levels

**L4:** 1<sup>st</sup> year Undergraduate  
(eg. CertHE, HNC)

**L5:** 2<sup>nd</sup> year Undergraduate  
(eg. DipHE, DipHE)

**L6:** 3<sup>rd</sup> year Undergraduate  
(eg. BA/BSc Hons, PGCE)

**L7:** Masters  
(eg. MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc, MB ChB, PGDips)

**L8:** Doctoral  
(eg. PhD/DPhil, EdD, DBA, DClinPsy)

### Generic Level Guidance

FHEQ and SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Further and Higher Education provide starting guidance for each level of study. It is argued that level progression is “characterised by two important related factors:

- the autonomy of the learner
- the increasing responsibility that is expected of the learner in the guidance given and the tasks set” (SEEC, 2003)

SEEC descriptors are grouped into five parts: settings, knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, performance and practice and personal and enabling skills. With all these generic types of guidance **you need to translate them into the language of your subject**.

### The SEEC Level 4 (1<sup>st</sup> Year Undergraduate)

#### Level 4

Summary credit level descriptors	Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.
<b>Setting</b>	
<i>Operational context</i>	Operates in a range of varied but predictable contexts that require the use of a specified range of techniques and information sources.
<i>Autonomy and responsibility for actions</i>	Acts with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines. Takes responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	
<i>Knowledge and understanding</i>	Has a broad understanding of the knowledge base and its terminology or discourse. Appreciates that areas of this knowledge base are open to ongoing debate and reformulation.
<b>Cognitive skills</b>	
<i>Conceptualisation and critical thinking</i>	Identifies principles and concepts underlying theoretical frameworks and approaches, identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
<i>Problem solving, research and enquiry</i>	Identifies a well-defined focus for enquiry, plans and undertakes investigative strategies using a limited and defined range of methods, collects data from a variety of sources, and communicates results effectively in an appropriate format.
<i>Synthesis and creativity</i>	Collects information from a variety of authoritative sources to inform a choice of solutions to standard problems in familiar contexts.
<i>Analysis and evaluation</i>	Judges the reliability of data and information using pre-defined techniques and/or criteria.
<b>Performance and practice</b>	
<i>Adaptation to context</i>	Locates own role in relation to specified and externally defined parameters.
<i>Performance</i>	Undertakes performance tasks that may be complex and non-routine, engaging in self-reflection.
<i>Team and organisational working</i>	Works effectively with others and recognises the factors that affect team performance.
<i>Ethical awareness and application</i>	Demonstrates awareness of ethical issues and is able to discuss these in relation to personal beliefs and values.
<b>Personal and enabling skills</b>	
<i>Personal evaluation and development</i>	Is aware of own capabilities in key areas and engages in development activity through guided self-direction.
<i>Interpersonal and communication skills</i>	Uses interpersonal and communication skills to clarify tasks and identify and rectify issues in a range of contexts.

# SEEC Comparative Summary for “Setting”

Setting	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Operational context	Operates in predictable and defined contexts that require the use of given techniques and information sources.	Operates in a range of varied but predictable contexts that require the use of a specified range of techniques and information sources.	Operates in situations of varying complexity and predictability requiring the application of a wide range of techniques and information sources.	Operates in complex and unpredictable contexts, requiring selection and application from a range of largely standard techniques and information sources.	Operates in complex and unpredictable and/or specialised contexts, requiring selection and application from a wide range of advanced techniques and information sources.	Operates in complex and unpredictable and/or specialised contexts at the forefront of knowledge.
Autonomy and responsibility for actions	Acts largely under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines. Takes responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures.	Acts with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines. Takes responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.	Acts with limited supervision and direction within defined guidelines, accepting responsibility for achieving personal and/or group outcomes and/or outputs.	Acts with minimal supervision or direction within agreed guidelines, taking responsibility for accepting support and accepting accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.	Acts with initiative in decision-making and accessing support within professional or given guidelines, accepting full accountability for outcomes.	Acts autonomously and with initiative, often in a professional capacity with responsibility for self and often others.

## Abbreviations

**FHEQ:** The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

**SEEC:** A consortium of universities and HE providers working together to advance the use and practice of academic credit, widening access to learning.

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## References

SEEC (2016) Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education, SEEC [Online] <http://www.seec.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SEEC-descriptors-2016.pdf>

SEEC (2019) How Credit Works, SEEC [Online] <https://www.seec.org.uk/for-learners/>

QAA (2014) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies

