

Higher Education in Wales Credit Specification & Guidance

Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales

June 2004



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INTRODUCTION

1. From 2003 onwards all accredited learning, including mainstream qualifications, will gradually be brought into a single unifying structure, the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (COFW). The Framework will embrace all post-16 education in Wales. The framework merges the concepts of volume of learning achievements (credit) and the demands made of that learning on the learner (level) to create a system that is able to include all types and styles of learning and all qualifications.
2. The framework originated in a Department of Education and Employment Project, "Implementing a Credit Framework for Higher Education" that was undertaken by the Welsh Access Unit between 1994 and 1996.
3. An important outcome of this project was the *Welsh Higher Education Credit Framework Handbook* published and endorsed in 1996 by the Higher Education Credit Initiative Wales (HECIW). The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) commissioned HECIW to produce two reports on aspects of higher education credit practice:
 - *The Quality Assurance of Credit Rating* (HECIW 1998); and
 - *Benchmarking of Credit ratings for Professional Qualifications* (HECIW December 1999)
4. In April 1999 KPMG reported to the Welsh Funding Councils on *"the establishment of a national framework for credit and qualifications within higher and further education ...in Wales.."*. The report noted *"the willingness on the part of HE and FE interests in Wales to work together to develop a single framework"*.
5. Through the establishment in 1994 of the HECIW and its successor the Welsh Higher

Education Credit Consortium (WHECC) in 2002 all of the aspects of the Credit Framework for Higher Education have been subject to full institutional consultation. The majority of Welsh HEIs have endorsed the main aspects of the Framework and continue to work collaboratively on its implementation.

6. HEFCW and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales initiated a project in 2001 to develop the COFW to cover ALL post-16 learning. The COFW is built on the success of the principles of the credit framework accepted by HE in Wales and relates closely to the credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI), *Credit and HE Qualifications* published jointly by the EWNI Credit Bodies in November 2001.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR WALES

7. In *Reaching Higher March 2002* the Welsh Assembly Government wrote *"We propose, in conjunction with HEFCW, to...act to realise fully the planned credit based qualifications system to secure clear stepping stones to achievement and straightforward options for learners who wish to transfer between providers."*
8. Three complementary processes underpin the establishment of the COFW. The HE Credit Initiative Wales, adopted progressively by HEIs in Wales since it was developed in the mid-1990s, the *Implementation Plan* (2003) whereby all qualifications in Wales will be incorporated by 2006 and the *Credit Common Accord* (2003) that is designed to formalise agreement on terminology, design specifications, principles and systems required to ensure that the currency of assigned and awarded credit is quality assured.

BENEFITS OF A CREDIT FRAMEWORK

9. The context of learning is becoming increasingly complex in its content, form and location. The trend towards lifelong learning with closer links to the workplace, the need to recognise work-related and informal non-certificated learning and the demands of e-learning place new demands on institutions. Increasingly institutions need a `common language` to describe all the learning that they are responsible for and credit which is based on the volume and level of learning demand provides a language that can unite all educational providers.
10. A credit and qualifications framework places learners at its centre, enabling them to gain credit for their learning whatever the level, the time taken, the volume or the location. By studying in smaller units and avoiding unnecessary repetition, learning can be planned more effectively and the learner's motivation can be maintained. A credit framework also provides the mechanism by which individuals can transfer between programmes in one institution, between institutions and have their relevant prior learning recognised.

SPECIFICATION AND GUIDANCE

11. The Specification and Guidance was first published in the *Welsh Higher Education Credit Framework Handbook* (HECIW 1996) and later revised for the publication of *Benchmarking Credit Ratings for Professional Qualifications* (HECIW 1999).
12. The CQFW has its origin in the higher education credit framework that has been in use in Wales from the mid-1990s. It also reflects the definitions and principles developed by the EWNH Credit Bodies in *Credit and HE Qualifications* and the terms and definitions in the CQFW *Implementation Plan* and the *Credit Common Accord*. The higher education qualifications in the framework are those defined by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE) in the publication *Higher Education Qualification Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (HEQF)* (QAAHE 2001).
13. To achieve its potential, preserve institutional autonomy and ensure articulation with credit and qualifications frameworks in use in other countries of the United Kingdom and developments in Europe, the framework specification and the guidance are deliberately confined to the minimum required to ensure that consistency and coherence is maintained.
14. The CQFW includes all post-16 learning and the specifications outlined here conform to the framework providing a continuum of learning opportunities promoting lifelong learning.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

CREDIT

15. Credit provides a currency which can relate varyingly organised academic and vocational learning, as it is defined, both in terms of the learning achievements (level) and the volume of the learning undertaken (learning time). It is important that the components of this definition of credit are also defined as precisely as is possible at the present time.

Credit is an award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified credit level.

The amount of credit attributed is based upon an estimation of the learning time, which it would take the average learner to achieve the learning outcomes specified.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

16. Learning outcomes provide a clear statement of achievement.
17. The inclusion of learning outcomes in module specifications promotes the development of coherent learning programmes and, by making the learning involved more evident, greatly assists student guidance. Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is facilitated when clear learning outcomes are available to indicate, with precision, the achievements to which any award of credit is awarded.

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.

For every learning outcome, assessment criteria must be specified either as an integral part of the outcome statement or separately.

It is intended that learning outcomes should specify the minimum achievement required at the point of assessment.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

18. Assessment criteria have a direct relationship with learning outcomes. The purpose of assessment criteria is to establish clear and unambiguous standards of achievement in respect of each learning outcome.

Assessment criteria are descriptions of what the learner is expected to achieve in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been met.

Assessment criteria should not be confused with methods of assessment.

LEARNING TIME

19. It is important that there is some concept of the volume of learning related to the achievement of specified outcomes. Time provides the customary measure, however, there is great variation in the real time taken by the individual learner. The amount of credit allocated to any particular achievement must also be independent of the mode of the learning. The concept of notional learning time has been developed by educational practitioners and is currently the only volume measure which adequately addresses the need.

DEFINITION OF TERMS cont'd

Learning time is a measure of the learning substance of a module/unit or a whole qualification. It is related to the amount of time a typical learner might be expected to take to complete all of the learning relevant to achievement of the learning outcomes.

Taught or contact time will, of course, vary according to the mode of delivery, but learning time will not. All learning relevant to the learning outcomes should be considered when learning time is being assessed.

Consideration should also be given to the level at which the learning is being offered and any assumed prior skill or knowledge required of the learner. Whatever learning activities are appropriate should be included in the equation: e.g. formal learning, essential practicals and visits, project work, private study, assessment, educational counselling etc.

Learning time, is notional, and is not equivalent to the actual time that any particular learner needs to spend in order to acquire the learning outcomes. The real time will vary according to the individual's capability, degree of prior experiential or other learning, any concurrent learning required within the work place, etc.

20. Within this concept of learning time, the award of credit is possible via a process of accreditation of prior learning (APL) or experience (APEL). Such processes take account of outcomes assessed to have been achieved through a variety of experiential or informal learning. Thus, although assessment may appear to be based on achievements of outcomes alone, time has been invested in a learning process prior to the assessment.

CREDIT LEVEL

21. Originally credit systems operating within institutions of higher education defined the level of any learning by its relationship to years of study for an Honours degree. The development of level descriptors, which define levels of learning by reference to the development of knowledge and skills, ensure that any module can be located at the correct level by relating its learning outcomes to the descriptors. Level descriptors, spanning the full spectrum of post-compulsory learning, have been developed by the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) (see Annex A) and adopted for use within the CQFW and are published in full (see Annex B). Alternative descriptors available for HE levels were developed by the HECIW project *Implementing a Credit Framework for Welsh Higher Education* published in 1996. These level descriptors are used by some HEIs in Wales and are published in the original Handbook (HECIW 1996).

The Credit level is an indicator of the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy derived from agreed generic level descriptors.

Levels are not intrinsically related to years of full time study or the previous learning achieved and/or experience of the learner. Credit level relates to modules and units of learning rather than whole awards.

As defined above, levels are indicative and are thus different from the specific learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria, which specify the threshold standards required for the award of credit for any specific module or unit.

DEFINITION OF TERMS cont'd

ORGANISATION OF LEARNING

22. If provision of accessible and flexible learning opportunities is the goal, then it is essential that credit can be applied both to whole programmes of learning leading to qualifications and to any smaller 'building blocks' of learning which may be discrete parts of larger programmes.
23. There are already a number of terms used, often interchangeable, to describe blocks of learning. The following proposals and guidance attempts to rationalise this terminology in order to ensure consistent use both within and across sectors and award hierarchies.

MODULE

24. It is important that there is clarity regarding exactly what is meant by the terms 'module' and 'unit'. Some institutions use the term unit synonymously with module, or describe groups of units as a module. Some externally validated qualifications offered by HEI's (for example NVQs and some other vocational and professional awards) are made up of 'units' and are seen as distinct from modules.

In the CQFW a module is a discrete and coherent block of learning. It may form a part of a programme of learning towards an overall qualification or stand alone. The module title should be descriptive of the content and delivery, and the assessment methodology must be defined such that the appropriate credit and level can be ascribed.

As a discrete block of learning each module should be separately assessed. Such assessment should seek to provide suitable evidence of achievements for the award of credit assigned to that module.

UNIT

25. It is noted that the CQFW distinguishes unit from module. A unit includes a title and code, learning outcomes, assessment criteria and credit value (number of credits at a credit level). A unit is therefore independent of the mode of learning, may be generic and is transferable between various styles of provision. It should also be recognised that under certain circumstances it may be regarded as a separate entity from a module.

A unit is the smallest part of learning that can be separately certificated. It is an explicit and coherent set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria and may be of any size.

A unit would normally incorporate a title and a code, learning outcomes and assessment criteria, the number of credits available to learners upon successfully completing the outcomes specified and the level at which learning is to be delivered and achieved. Units are independent of mode of delivery and do not therefore prescribe delivery or assessment methodologies. Where units are used, one or more such units may be grouped, with additional information on delivery and assessment methodologies, to form a module.

DEFINITION OF TERMS cont'd

PROGRAMME

26. The concept of 'a course' as a linear learning path followed by large numbers of students has broken down as modularisation enables and promotes more varied and flexible provision. It is vital, however, that there is still some concept of overall coherence and progression of learning where this is appropriate.

Modules may be grouped into coherent programmes of study, often leading towards a recognised qualification. Programmes may be standard or specific to a particular learner or group of learners.

Modularised provision enables learners to tailor their programme of study to meet perceived needs. It is important, however, to ensure that such provision is coherent and leads towards a relevant outcome. Learner guidance and counselling will, therefore, be an essential adjunct to the modularised curriculum.

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA

AWARD OF CREDIT

Credit is therefore awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes that have been verified through reliable and valid assessment in line with current rules and regulations.

Credit is awarded to individuals when they can demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved according to the assessment criteria at the requisite level.

N.B. Documented systems for compensation and/or condonement may be considered within the definition of assessment, thereby enabling the award of a declared maximum of credit through such mechanisms as determined by institutional regulations.

27. Decisions about grading systems, schemes and criteria are a matter for individual institutions. The CQFW does not encompass a grading scheme.

Credit awarded is independent of grading.

Additional credit cannot be awarded for exceptional achievement; outcomes can be achieved or not achieved. If there is a requirement to recognise grades of achievement, a separate grading system must be adopted.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC CREDIT

28. For the purpose of credit accumulation and transfer, it is important to recognise that, whilst all learning may be accredited, not all credit can or will be accumulated towards any specified overall programme of award.

General credit refers to the credit attributed to specified learning outcomes; specific credit refers to that amount of general credit which can be accepted as contributing to a particular programme.

In the case of student transfer it is, therefore, the responsibility of the receiving institution to establish that portion of the general credit presented by any one individual which it will consider relevant to be counted as specific credit within the context of the programme of study for which that individual wishes to register. It may be necessary to scrutinise the learning outcomes against which this credit was awarded in order to facilitate such decisions

ESTABLISHING LEVEL

29. In accepting the specification of a module and a unit it is implicit that each module, to which credit has been ascribed, must have an associated level.

The level of modules/units is determined by the degree of correspondence between the stated learning outcomes and the level descriptors.

All modules/units must be assigned to a level. From the above, it is logical that modules/units can only have one level although they may contribute towards programmes leading to awards at a different level. Any changes in learning outcomes and assessment criteria will result in the creation of a different module/unit which will be assigned another level.

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA cont'd

A module/unit may be utilised in various programmes of study. Its level as defined in relation to the level descriptors will always be the same, regardless of its position for any particular programme. Thus a level 4 module in French language maybe studied in any three year undergraduate language studies programme, whilst also being available as an option for the second year of a European business studies programme. It is crucial that institutions consider this issue when developing their regulations regarding credit and level requirements for qualifications.

HEIs wish to establish a minimum requirement for credit achievement at the qualification level, whilst allowing flexibility for inclusion of a limited number of credits to be gained through study of relevant modules at levels higher or lower than that of the overall qualification. (see Annex C)

CREDIT AND QUALIFICATION

30. Whilst a programme of learning which is credit-bearing may lead to a qualification, the credit itself is not a qualification, but simply a recognition of achievement. Credit, therefore, should be considered as an award but not as a qualification.

Credit is an award in its own right and can be accumulated towards qualifications under specified criteria.

Criteria for credit accumulation towards any qualification will be specified by the appropriate awarding body.

CREDIT RATING OF EXTERNAL AWARDS

31. Currently, individual universities allocate diverse amounts (and levels) of general credit to the same professional or other off-campus award.

Each individual, externally validated, award should be recognised as carrying a single general credit rating.

This would apply to professional body and all other awarding body qualifications offered by HEIs.

It is not intended that this should involve any generalisation about credit to be allocated to whole groups of qualifications. The great variation in both outcomes and volume of learning between the many and varied individual external awards means that it may be necessary to develop and apply a collaborative procedure to enable cross-institutional agreement on the number of credits to be ascribed to each and every individual externally validated award as required.

It is possible, that programmes of study may be developed which lead toward these qualifications but embrace learning outcomes additional to those specifically required by the qualification-awarding body. Such additional learning could attract additional credit.

The agreed single general credit rating of any specific programme would not affect the right of an institution to assign a different amount of specific credit to that learning, within the context of transfer or accumulation of credit towards any other specified award.

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA cont'd

QUALIFICATION LEVEL

The level of any qualification is established by matching its overall learning outcomes to the Qualification Descriptors in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) (QAAHE 2001).

In a modular programme the modules that make up the qualification are likely to have credit level that is equal to, lower, or higher than that of the qualification itself, in accordance with any criteria established by the regulations of the HEI or relevant awarding body. (See Annex C)

ACADEMIC YEAR

32. Currently most but not all provision is modular and/or described in terms of learning outcomes and most institutions operate within an academic year structure. Therefore credit will need to be ascribed to such provision in relation to a clear and widely accepted concept of the academic year. The total learning time (including assessment time, available within the academic year for any single learner must therefore be defined.

In general the academic year will be based on 1200 hours of learning time for undergraduate study, and 1800 hours of learning time for postgraduate study.

This assumes that in the majority of cases, full-time study for undergraduates is 40 hours per week for 30 weeks of the year and for postgraduates, 40 hours per week for 45 weeks of the year, or its equivalent.

If a single credit value for both undergraduate and postgraduate learning is assumed, the variation in the undergraduate and postgraduate academic year

implies that the number of credits available in any one academic year will vary. Up to 120 credits may be achieved in a full-time undergraduate academic year, whilst 180 credits is possible within a postgraduate year. For programmes which require learning (linked to specified learning outcomes) over a greater proportion of the year, thus extending the learning time available, it may be possible to achieve a proportionally higher number of credits.

CREDIT LEVELS

33. The CQFW has adopted the NICATS hierarchy of levels that have also been adopted by the England, Wales and Northern Ireland Credit Bodies and published in *Credit and HE Qualifications* (EWNI 2001).

There will be a single hierarchy of levels embracing all post-compulsory learning.

Currently there are 9 levels including 4 pre-HE levels, 3 undergraduate levels and 2 postgraduate levels. The single hierarchy of levels gives formal recognition to the levels of pre-HE learning. This facilitates the incorporation, where appropriate, of some modules at these levels into programmes of study offered by HE institutions. (Annex A and B)

There will be three levels corresponding broadly with the current system of conventional undergraduate study (Levels 4, 5 and 6) and two postgraduate levels (Levels 7 and 8).

Levels are not intrinsically linked to year of study in an undergraduate degree, although there may be a correlation.

Level descriptors now developed should enable all learning, irrespective of mode, to be incorporated within this system of levels.

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA cont'd

It is not appropriate to continue to utilise separately identified levels for learning which is work-based, experiential or undertaken during a sandwich year. Postgraduate study is not necessarily always undertaken at postgraduate levels 7 or 8.

Post-experience learning may be at any level. There is no direct relationship between such study and any individual level.

CREDIT VALUE

34. Whilst it is important to note that credit is based on learning outcomes achieved and not simply time served, the customary measure of credit size is learning time. Within the CQFW 10 learning hours is used as the measure of one credit.

One credit equates to learning outcomes achievable within 10 notional hours of learning.

Ascribing credit should be undertaken according to an institution's agreed quality assurance guidelines and procedures. Institutional procedures should be informed by the CQFW Credit Specification and Guidance.

ACCUMULATION OF CREDIT TOWARDS SPECIFIED AWARDS

35. An agreed credit specification will assist in clarifying relationships between the various awards. Credit acts as a currency which can be used to assess relative values, but credit can also be accumulated towards overall awards according to criteria specified by the awarding body.
36. There are a growing number of awards at HE levels. If an awarding body adopts the credit framework specifications, it will be up to that body to define, in terms of credit and level, what learners will be required to achieve in order to attain their particular award.
37. There is broad agreement in the Welsh HE sector on the total number of credits required for the award of the main HE qualifications *Quality Assurance for Credit Rating* (HECIW/HEFCW 1998). The exact requirements for credits at specific levels, however, show some variation between institutions. The EWN Credit Bodies undertook an extensive programme of consultation with HEIs in 2000. In *Credit and HE Qualifications* they published guidance on the minimum number of credit values of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and the CQFW endorses the recommendations. (See Annex C)

OPERATIONAL CRITERIA cont'd

The following defines the minimum number of credits required to be pursued for the award of the main qualifications:

Undergraduate

Certificate	120 credits
Diploma	240 credits
Honours Degree	360 credits

Postgraduate

Certificate	60 credits
Diploma	120 credits
Masters	180 credits

The requirements, in terms of amounts of credit to be achieved at each level, must be specified.

Specifications of the credit requirement at each level may be best expressed in terms of minimum or maximum allowed. It is possible that a small number of credits at levels prior to HE may be included.

ANNEX A

NICATS SUMMARY GENERIC LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those which follow.

Learning accredited at the following levels will reflect the ability to:

ENTRY LEVEL: employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts and carry out directed activity under close supervision.

LEVEL 1: employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.

LEVEL 2: apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.

LEVEL 3: apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.

LEVEL 4: 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; operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

LEVEL 5: generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 6: critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilising specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; accept accountability for determining and achieving group and/or personal outcomes.

LEVEL 7: display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical and professional activity; accepting accountability for all related decision making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 8: make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.

ANNEX B

NICATS TABLE OF GENERIC LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

	INTELLECTUAL SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES	PROCESSES	ACCOUNTABILITY
Entry	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 range of roles.	Carry out directed activity under close supervision. Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.
1	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.
2	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.
3	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 the output of others.

ANNEX B

NICATS TABLE OF GENERIC LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

4	<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>
5	<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>
6	<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>

ANNEX B

NICATS TABLE OF GENERIC LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

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

ANNEX C

A GUIDE TO THE CREDIT VALUES OF HE QUALIFICATIONS

Summary (EWNI 2001)

The guidelines which follow are designed to complement the Higher Education Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland published by the QAA. Table 2 below lists the five qualification levels which make up the Qualification Framework for HE [HEQF] and the four qualification levels which make up the lower

part of the National Qualifications Framework [NQF][left-hand block]. It shows the correlation between these qualification levels and the recommended credit levels of the EWNI credit framework and the commonly used FE and HE levels [right-hand block].

HEQF	Qualification Levels
	Doctoral D Level Master's M Level
	Honours H Level Intermediate I Level Certificate C Level
	NQF
	Level 3 Advanced Level 2 Intermediate Level 1 Foundation Entry

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

THE GENERAL APPROACH IN DEVISING THESE GUIDELINES

The EWNI credit bodies are recommending a minimum number of criteria necessary to secure the standard of each award. The over specification of qualifications could place restrictions on programme designers and students. For this reason the credit bodies have avoided recommending a credit requirement at every level engaged by a qualification. We have used four general criteria:

- (i) The recommended minimum overall credits for a qualification
- (ii) The range of levels encompassed by the qualification
- (iii) The recommended number of credits at the highest credit level
- (iv) The recommended maximum number of credits at the lowest level

The fourth criterion helps to ensure that the standard is not compromised by the inclusion of excessive numbers of credits at the lowest level.

THE CREDIT VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME TO BE STUDIED

In the two tables below, we offer guidance on the minimum credit value of each HE qualification. Institutions are not obliged to adhere to these minimum credit values for the programmes that students undertake. They may choose to validate

programmes of study that exceed the minimum credit values in terms of the number of credits needed or in terms of the levels at which the credit is attained.

POSTGRADUATE AND GRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS

We set out in Table 3 the recommended minimum credit values of postgraduate and graduate qualifications. In each case there is an allowance of a small number of credits at a level lower than that normally associated with the award. This is intended to facilitate the inclusion of relevant ancillary studies

within the validated programme. It is recommended that programmes leading to the Integrated Master's Degree reflect planned progression and credit attainment through the levels spanned by the qualification. The reader is referred to *Credit and HE Qualifications* (EWN1 2001) for further explanation.

Qualification	HEQF Qualification Level	Min overall credits	The range of levels No of credits at highest level	Max credits at lowest level
POSTGRADUATE				
Professional Doctorate	D	540 credits	Levels (6), 7, 8 Min 360 credits at level 8	Max 30 credits at level 6
Master's Degree	M	180 credits	Levels (6), 7 Min 150 credits at level 7	Max 30 credits at level 6
Integrated Master's Degree	M	480 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5, 6, 7 Min 120 credits at level 7	Max 30 credits at level 3
PG Diploma	M	120 credits	Levels (6), 7 Min 90 credits at level 7	Max 30 credits at level 6
PG Certificate	M	60 credits	Levels (6), 7 Min 40 credits at level 7	Max 20 credits at level 6
GRADUATE				
Graduate Diploma	H	120 credits	Levels (3, 4, 5), 6 Min 90 credits at level 6	Max 30 credits at level 3
Graduate Certificate	H	60 credits	Levels (3, 4, 5), 6 Min 40 credits at level 6	Max 20 credits at level 3

UNDERGRADUATE AND ASSOCIATED QUALIFICATIONS

The table below sets out the recommended minimum credit values for undergraduate and associated qualifications. In each case there is a small allowance of 30 credits at Level 3 which is

intended to allow the inclusion of relevant ancillary studies within the validated programmes leading to the qualification.

Qualification	HEQF Qualification Level	Min overall credits	The range of levels No of credits at highest level	Max credits at lowest level
Honours Degree	H	360 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5, 6 Min 90 credits at level 6	Max 30 credits at level 3
Ordinary Degree	I	300 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5, 6 Min 60 credits at level 6	Max 30 credits at level 3
Foundation Degree	I	240 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5 Min 90 credits at level 5	Max 30 credits at level 3
Diploma HE	I	240 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5 Min 90 credits at level 5	Max 30 credits at level 3
HND	I	240 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5 Min 90 credits at level 5	Max 30 credits at level 3
HNC	C	150 credits	Levels (3), 4, 5 Min 30 credits at level 5	Max 30 credits at level 3
Certificate HE	C	120 credits	Levels (3), 4 Min 90 credits at level 4	Max 30 credits at level 3

It is recommended that programmes leading to the Honours Degree and the Ordinary Degree reflect planned progression and credit attainment through the levels spanned by the qualification.

NOTES