AWARD STANDARDS - **BUSINESS**

FOREWORD

The Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999 required the Higher Education and Training Awards Council to determine standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners "before a higher education and training award may be made". These standards are based on the level indicators and award-type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ, Appendix 2).

Standards for certain broad fields of learning were developed for awards at level 6 to level 9 on the NFQ. These standards represent an elaboration of the generic descriptors of the Framework. They should facilitate experts in particular fields of learning to create the link between their programmes' intended learning outcomes and the NFQ. These standards are not programme specifications. It is through these, however, that the relationship between a programme, its component parts and the NFQ should be evident. The standards are a reference point and a point of comparison against which individual programmes may be justified.

They are intended to provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a particular field of learning. In designing programmes, providers must take cognisance of the standards for specific fields of learning where they generally relate to the programme being developed. It is, however, recognised that there is a significant growth in multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary programmes; there are emerging fields of learning; and in addition, within each field there is the vast spectrum of programmes possible, which range from highly practical to very theoretical.

In this context, it is not possible to have a standard, or multiple standards, that cater for the complete range of programmes possible. It is therefore expected that the standards for specific fields of learning will be used as reference points for the design of programmes.

In drafting the standards every effort has been made to ensure that they will provide for flexibility and variety in the design of programmes and therefore encourage innovation within an overall agreed framework. It is not expected that all programmes will include every learning outcome identified in a standard. It is, however, expected that many programmes will include learning outcomes that are not included in the relevant standard. When designing a programme, each learning outcome in the standard should be considered. Where departure from these is necessary, it should be justified in the context of the specific orientation of the programme and other facts pertaining to it. Each programme provider should be able to demonstrate how the design and content of its own programmes has been informed by the standard.

The level descriptors of the Framework, the award type descriptors and consequently the standards for the specific fields of learning are divided into three different types of learning outcomes - knowledge, skill and competence.

These strands are further subdivided (sub-strands). Each strand/sub-strand is important. The relative weighting of each strand in a programme will vary from programme to programme. The weighting will be determined by many factors, including for example, the practical nature of a programme, or otherwise. Each strand/sub-strand should be addressed appropriately in every programme. Where a programme is multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary in nature, the use of more than one standard may be necessary. In such cases, the scope, depth and balance of concepts and application should not result in the neglect of either the theoretical, or applied, at the expense of the other.

These standards were originally determined by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council in August 2005 and reissued with a new foreword by QQI in July 2014. They are QQI awards standards under section 84 (10) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Award Standards - Business

Knowledge				
	Level 6	**Level 7**	**Level 8**	**Level 9**
	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:	The graduate should be able to demonstrate:
Knowledge-Breadth	*Specialised knowledge of a broad area*	*Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas*	*An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning*	*A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning*
	Basic knowledge of general business subjects: 1. Management and Organisation (Including: Accounting, Finance, Human Resources, Enterprise, Marketing …) 2. Regulatory Environment (Including: Law …) 3. Information and Communication Systems (Including: Accounting, Information and Communications Technology …) 4. Economics (Including: Sectoral and International Economics, …). General knowledge of current business environments.	A developed and integrated knowledge of basic business areas: 1. Management and Organisation (Including: Accounting, Finance, Human Resources, Operations, Enterprise, Marketing, Strategy …) 2. Regulatory and Control Environment (Including: Taxation, Auditing and Corporate Governance …) 3. Information and Communication Systems (Including: Accounting, Information and Communications Technology, Systems Development and Management …) 4. Economics (Including: Sectoral and International Economics, Econometrics and History …) A recognition of how business functions interrelate and are integrated.	An in-depth understanding of the theories, concepts and methods pertaining to the field of business and/or the particular subfield of business, for example: 1. Management and Organisation; 2. Business and the Economic Environment; 3. Information and Communication Systems. Understanding should be one of emergent critical appraisal. An appreciation of the inter-relationships between business functions and processes.	Understanding should be one of an advanced theoretical and of an emergent critical appraisal.
Knowledge-Kind	*Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory*	*Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas*	*Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)*	*A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning*
	Basic understanding of established business frameworks and theories.	Elaborated understanding and preliminary critical orientations towards established business frameworks and theories. An integrated application towards disparate subject areas. Contextualised and specialised knowledge of specific aspects of the business environment.	Extensive up-to-date knowledge and understanding of one or more of the core sub-fields of business, with a developed awareness of the received business environment, social responsibilities and the need for adaptation and change. Demonstrate a knowledge that is integrated across a number of the core sub-fields, in general business degrees.	Awareness of some seminal original work in a sub-field of business and have read and appraised same.

Award Standards - Business

Know-How & Skill-Range	*Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools*	*Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study*	*Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity*	*Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry*
	Demonstrate and apply technical skills and know-how in the particular sub-field of business. Communicate effectively with individuals and peer groups using information and communications technologies.	Demonstrate an ability to communicate to both peers and supervisors, on technical matters in the particular sub-field of business. Demonstrate the techniques, skills and knowledge for training in the particular sub-field of business. Develop from the knowledge the specialist technical know-how, relevant to the particular sub-field of business.	Mastery of specialised business skills in one or more of the core sub-fields of business. Ability to review the literature in a specified field or sub-field of business, to access business data from a variety of sources and to use appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques for the purposes of primary and secondary research. Ability to write, present and defend material that articulates ideas, insights and analysis, using a variety of business media. Engage in debate in an organisational context, mindful of position. Have a comprehensive awareness and understanding of core recognised professional and technical standards in the particular field of business. Ability to use the current technical language to describe practices in business, or a particular sub-field of business and apply them to structured problems. Demonstrate interpersonal skills of effective listening, negotiation, persuasion and presentation.	Detailed mastery of specialised business skills in one or more of the core sub-fields of business, or in a specific sub-field. Ability to construct a literature review in a specified sub-field of business and to draw material into a cohesive whole. Ability to source and evaluate multiple sources of business data and realise limits of such data. Ability to use appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques to conduct primary and secondary research. Ability to write, present and defend material that articulates ideas, insights, analysis and policy to peer and practitioner audiences, using a variety of business media. Possesses techniques, skills and knowledge for teaching in a particular sub-field of business.
Know-How & Skill-Selectivity	*Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems*	*Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes*	*Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing*	*Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques*
	Ability to gather, assemble and display data in structured business scenarios.	Awareness of planning, design and innovation issues. Awareness of the issues related to the non-structured business scenarios.	Ability to exercise judgement, to facilitate informed decisions on complex management, technical and functional areas relating to organisations, products, processes and services. Ability to analyse business environments and to prepare options and scenarios to aid decision making in a business context.	Ability to make appropriate judgements leading to informed decisions in a business environment on complex management, technical and functional areas relating to organisations, products, processes and services. Ability to apply specialised, professional skills to complex business environments.

Award Standards - Business

Competence-Context	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and nonroutine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and illdefined contexts
	Ability to work in a structured business context under supervision.	Ability to supervise specific work tasks. Ability to analyse, interpret and manipulate data in pursuit of solutions to specific business problems.	Ability to analyse, interpret and manipulate data in pursuit of solutions to complex business problems. Ability to apply problem solving and creative thinking across a range of business sub-fields. Capacity to contribute creatively to the process of business development. Ability to integrate knowledge from a range of subject areas and analyse information from a variety of contexts. Critical understanding of the general ethical implications of job roles and responsibilities in a business and wider social context.	Ability to apply advanced technical research skills, constructively criticise, draw conclusions and offer recommendations within the particular sub-field of business.
Competence-Role	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
	Ability to contribute effectively and participate in a business team. Capacity to participate, (contribute and collaborate), and contribute constructively in a structured team environment across the core business areas. Self-directed in terms of time, motivation and planning; and self-aware to be open and sensitive to others.	Ability to take direction, accept criticism and use feedback to enhance own performance and that of others. Capacity to participate constructively, (contribute and collaborate), in a non-structured team environment, across the core business areas. Self directed in terms of time, motivation and planning; and self-aware to be open and sensitive to others.	Capacity to participate constructively, (contribute, collaborate and direct, if so charged), in complex team environments across the core business areas. Capacity to reflect on own practice and to develop an understanding of the pressure of organisational roles.	
Competence-Learning to Learn	Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
	Initial familiarity and experience with the principles of self- directed learning. Preliminary evidence of own learning, competencies, styles and challenges.	Ability to integrate knowledge and work-life experiences. Ability for autonomous, independent learning. Identify learning needs and develop learning competencies through case study, discussion groups and/or problem–based learning.	Ability to function effectively in differing business contexts. Ability to act on own initiative to address own learning needs. Have a developed awareness of the need for the continued enhancement of business competencies. Ability to train others in a supervised environment, in an aspect of a specialised or general sub-field of business.	

Award Standards - Business

Competence-Insight	*Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others*	*Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others*	*Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others*	*Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them*
	Awareness of social, community and ethical issues in a business context.	Appreciation of social, community and issues in a business context.	Capacity to be socially responsible and develop a sense of own value system. Capacity to draw complex information together and draw out policy implications. Capacity to reflect on own practice and reorganise skills set in order to produce something new.	Capacity to participate in reflective communities of practice and commitment to continuous professional development. Capacity to contribute valuable creative and innovative perspectives to develop business initiatives.

APPENDIX 1

National Framework of Qualifications - Grid of Level Indicators

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
Knowledge - Breadth	Elementary knowledge	Knowledge that is narrow in range	Knowledge moderately broad in range	Broad range of knowledge	Broad range of knowledge	Specialised knowledge of a broad area	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge -Kind	Demonstrable by recognition or recall	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements	Mainly concrete in reference and with some elements of abstraction or theory	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers
Know-how and skill – Range	Demonstrate basic practical skills, and carry out directed activity using basic tools	Demonstrate limited range of basic practical skills, including the use of relevant tools	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools	Demonstrate a moderate range of practical and cognitive skills and tools	Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools	Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials
Know-how and skill – Selectivity	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable	Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems	Select from a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems	Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems	Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge
Competence - Context	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts	Act within a limited range of contexts	Act in familiar and unfamiliar contexts	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts	display mastery Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts
Competence – Role	Act in a limited range of roles	Act in a range of roles under direction	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups	Act with considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy	Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities; join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsiblity for the work of others and/or for the allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes
Competence – Learning to Learn	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment	Learn to learn within a managed environment	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment	Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts
Competence – Insight	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour	Assume partial responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour	Assume full responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others	Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them

Note: The outcomes at each level include those of all the lower levels in the same sub-strand