

## Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the **learning outcomes** relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications

| EQF Level              | Knowledge  | Skills   | Competence  |
|------------------------|--|--|---|
|                        | <b>In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as <i>theoretical and/or factual</i>.</b>   | <b>In the context of EQF, skills are described as<br/><i>cognitive</i> (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking), and<br/><i>practical</i> (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)</b> | <b>In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of <i>responsibility and autonomy</i>.</b>   |
| Level 1                | Basic general knowledge  | Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks  | Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context  |
| Level 2                | Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study  | Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools   | Work or study under supervision with some autonomy  |
| Level 3                | Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study  | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information  | Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems  |
| Level 4                | Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study  | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study  | Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities |
| Level 5 <sup>[1]</sup> | Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge | A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems  | Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others  |

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| Level 6 <sup>[2]</sup> | Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles   | Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study   | Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups               |
| Level 7 <sup>[3]</sup> | Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research<br><br>Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields | Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields   | Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams |
| Level 8 <sup>[4]</sup> | Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields   | The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice       | Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research                     |

### Compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area provides descriptors for cycles. Each cycle descriptor offers a generic statement of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of that cycle.

1. The descriptor for the higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle), developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process, corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5.
2. The descriptor for the first cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6.
3. The descriptor for the second cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7.
4. The descriptor for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page>