

Nottingham Trent University

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## **Quality Handbook**

**Part B: Award frameworks**

**Section 3: Undergraduate  
awards**

# Section 3

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## 1. Undergraduate award framework

**A University undergraduate course will reflect, and be approved, monitored and reviewed against the [UK Framework for Higher Education Qualification \(FHEQ\)](#).**

**A University course leading to an award within the undergraduate award framework must meet the level and credit criteria set out for that award.**

**For each award there is also an award descriptor.**

**All University awards reflect positive achievements.**

## Awards and levels

### 2. Awards

2.1 The following tables locate each University award within a level and state their credit tariff. Where an award includes several levels, it is located in the table at its highest level. In addition to the credit tariff, each award has an award descriptor (as described in paras. 5 - 22).

- Each of the University's academic awards is referenced to the appropriate level in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- Course teams are also asked to take cognisance of Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Foundation Degree Characteristics.

#### Level 7

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
7	Integrated Master's	480 (at least 120 at L7, 120 at L6,	4800	MChem, MEng, MPhys, MSci.

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		120 at L5 & 120 at L4)		MMath, MBiol, MComp, MGeog, MLaw (Hons available)
<b>7</b>	Exempting Degree (Law)	440 (60 at L7, 140 at L6, 120 at L5 & 120 at L4)	4400	LLB (Hons)
<b>7</b>	Exempting Degree (Architecture)	240 (120 at L7, 120 at L6)	2400	MArch

## Level 5, 6 or 7

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
<b>5, 6 or 7</b>	Certificate in Education and Training	60	600	CET
<b>5, 6 or 7</b>	Award in Education and Training	40	400	AET

## Level 6

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
<b>6</b>	Honours Degree	360 (120 at L6, 120 at L5 & 120 at L4)	3600	BA (Hons), BArch (Hons), BSc (Hons), BEng (Hons), LLB (Hons)
<b>6</b>	Graduate Honours Degree	360 (at least 120 at L6)	As above (but see para 7.1)	As above
<b>6</b>	Ordinary Degree	300 (at least 60 at L6, 120 at L5 & 120 at L4)	3000	BArch, BA, BSc, BEng, LLB
<b>6</b>	Professional Graduate	120 (120 at L6)	1200	ProfGCE

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	Certificate in Education			
<b>6</b>	Graduate Diploma	120 (90 at L6)	1200	GradDip
<b>6</b>	Graduate Certificate	60 (30 at L6)	600	GradCert
<b>6</b>	Advanced Diploma	40 – 120	1200	AdvDip

## Level 5 or 6

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
<b>5 or 6</b>	Professional Diploma	120	1200	ProfDip
<b>5 or 6</b>	Professional Certificate	40-60	400-600	ProfCert

## Level 5

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
<b>5</b>	Foundation Degree	240 (120 at L5 & 120 at L4)	2400	FdA, FdSc, FdEng
<b>5</b>	Diploma of Higher Education	240 (120 at L5 & 120 at L4)	2400	DipHE
<b>5</b>	Higher National Diploma	240	2400	HND
<b>5</b>	Certificate in Education	120	1200	CertEd
<b>5</b>	Diploma	40-120	400-1200	Dip

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## Level 4

Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
4	Certificate of Higher Education	120	1200	CertHE
4	Higher Certificate	120	1200	HigherCert
4	Higher National Certificate	120	1200	HNC
4	Certificate	40-120	400-1200	Cert

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Level	Award	Minimum credit volume	Notional learning hours	Award designation
3	Fd. Certificate	40-120	400-1200	N.A.

## Variant awards

- The Certificate in Education and Training and Award in Education and Training are only available as interim awards on courses in Post-Compulsory Education and Training.
- A Higher Certificate is only available as an interim award on a foundation degree. (A foundation or diploma award is available under exceptional circumstances – see para. 23).
- Integrated master's and exempting degree courses must include level 7 learning, although they are predominantly undergraduate and therefore located in this framework.

## 3. Credits from a lower level

- 3.1 At any given level, a course may include a module(s) from a lower (or exceptionally a higher) level, provided this fits with the course's aims, outcomes, and specification and is approved accordingly as follows:

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- a. Unless otherwise indicated in the Framework Tables, the module(s) from a lower level should not normally exceed a total of 20 credits for a full level of 120 credits, or 10 credits for a 60 credit or 40 credit course.
- b. The module should be drawn from the adjacent level, although a special case for an even lower level can be considered (e.g. where the University Language Programme (ULP) is incorporated).

This flexibility applies at each level of a course. For example, an Honours Degree incorporating 'lower' level modules at each level may have the following composition: level 3: 20 credits; level 4: 120 credits; level 5: 120 credits; level 6: 100 credits.

- c. This guideline enables courses to provide ancillary and broadening studies (or more flexibility in terms of option choice) without needing to design new modules or re-specify existing modules to a higher academic level.
- d. A Professional Diploma / Certificate and a Graduate Diploma / Certificate may normally include 20 or more level 7 credits because of the special nature of these courses.

### 3.2 Such dispensation cannot apply in the following specific cases:

- a. Ordinary degree – it must contain at least 60 credits at level 6.
- b. Integrated Master's degree – it must contain at least 120 credits at level 7.

### Exceeding the dispensation

- This level of dispensation may be exceptionally exceeded provided it is justified and approved through the University's course design and approval process (see Quality Handbook (QH) Section 5).

## 4. Level descriptors

**The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)<sup>1</sup> describe the general nature and outcomes of the main type of qualifications at each level of study. The descriptors are in two parts: a statement of outcomes which are assessed in order to demonstrate achievement of the award; and a statement of the wider abilities that a typical student would be expected to have developed. All NTU undergraduate awards align to these descriptors. They are**

<sup>1</sup> UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards. The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. QAA: November 2014.  
September 2023

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**intended to act as a guide in the processes of course development and approval and assessment.**

- 4.1 Each qualification descriptor sets out the outcomes for the typical or main qualification type at each framework level. When determining the level of an award, it is the level at which the outcomes are assessed that is the determining factor.
- 4.2 At most levels there is more than one type of qualification that may be achieved. Within each level, the various types of qualifications involve different volumes of learning (for example master's degrees entail more learning than postgraduate certificates). As a consequence of this there are likely to be differences in the range and nature of intended course learning outcomes. Not all of the qualification types at each level therefore meet all of the expectations of the qualification descriptor. Where a qualification type other than the main qualification has a smaller volume of learning, the qualification descriptor for the degree is used as a reference point and the sub-degree qualification is expected to meet the descriptor in part.
- 4.3 Note that the FHEQ level 5 descriptors relate specifically to foundation degrees. When using the level 5 descriptors in reference to a three year bachelor's degree it is likely that the specific descriptions relating to employment and employability will not necessarily be relevant. The descriptions of the expected 'academic' outcomes should however be used to ensure alignment.
- 4.4 Course teams may contextualise the descriptors to particular subjects but must ensure congruence with the FHEQ level descriptors.
- 4.5 The FHEQ descriptors are provided below for levels 4, 5 and 6. The NTU generic level descriptor is provided for level 3:

	<b>Students learning at this level will demonstrate:</b>	<b>Students will typically be able to:</b>	<b>Students will also have:</b>
<b>Level 6</b> <b>The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in</b>	a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline an ability to deploy accurately established	apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data	the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts</li> </ul>



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	Students learning at this level will demonstrate:	Students will typically be able to:	Students will also have:
<b>full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 6 of the FHEQ, including bachelor's degrees, and graduate diplomas.</b>	<p>techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline</p> <p>conceptual understanding that enables the student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline</li> <li>to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline</li> </ul> <p>an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge</p> <p>the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).</p>	<p>(that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem</p> <p>communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 5</b> <b>The descriptor provided for this level of</b>	knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and	use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of	the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of

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	Students learning at this level will demonstrate:	Students will typically be able to:	Students will also have:
the FHEQ is for any foundation degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 5 of the FHEQ, including Diplomas of Higher Education.	<p>of the way in which those principles have developed</p> <p>ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context</p> <p>knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study</p> <p>an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.</p>	<p>information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis</p> <p>effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively</p> <p>undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.</p>	personal responsibility and decision-making.

	Students learning at this level will demonstrate:	Students will typically be able to:	Students will also have:
<b>Level 4</b> <b>The descriptor provided for</b>	knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles	evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems	the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring

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	Students learning at this level will demonstrate:	Students will typically be able to:	Students will also have:
<b>this level is for any Certificate of Higher Education, which should meet the descriptor in full. This descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications aligned with level 4 of the FHEQ.</b>	associated with their area(s) of study an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.	related to their area(s) of study and/or work communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment.	the exercise of some personal responsibility.
<b>Level 3 Learning at this level will reflect the ability to:</b>	demonstrate comprehension of basic theories and concepts necessary for progression; employ a limited range of specialist foundation skills; generate a range of responses to well defined problems; access information and begin to evaluate it independently; demonstrate competence in a range of basic communication and learning skills.	operate in a variety of mainly familiar contexts; demonstrate know-how in planning and performing tasks.	undertake directed tasks.

## Supplementary note

- For integrated master's and exempting degree awards, the level 7 component is described in the level descriptor within the Postgraduate Taught and Research Awards Section (QH Section 4).

## Award descriptors

### 5. Integrated Master's

- 5.1 Holders of an Integrated Master's will have developed the graduate attributes associated with an honours graduate (see para. 7.1), but will also have extended their knowledge, skills and understanding into outcomes associated with aspects of level 7 learning. The specific learning outcomes of an Integrated Master's will be approved through the University's course design and approval process, applying the level 6 and level 7 descriptors in an appropriate manner.

## Supplementary note

- Integrated master's are four year degree courses which combine 120 credits of level 7 study with 360 credits of undergraduate study. They are designed to provide students with the opportunity to study their subject in greater depth than would ordinarily be achieved during a standard 3 year undergraduate course.
- Level 7 study can take place over the third and fourth year. Where a student does not meet the required threshold for progression to a master's award at the end of year 3, the student is transferred onto the appropriate bachelor's degree and awarded a bachelor's qualification. Some courses stipulate progression requirements for Integrated Master's at the end of year 2. Thresholds are clearly articulated in the definitive course information in CourseLoop.
- Fall-back bachelor's awards are available where students do not achieve the requirements for an integrated master's degree.

### 6. Exempting Degree

- 6.1 Holders of an Exempting Degree will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, a significant amount of which will be at the current

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boundaries of an academic discipline. They will have a systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and a critical understanding of the subject and its theories, principles and concepts, and will have the ability to understand, plan and apply appropriate research methodologies and techniques. Through this, graduates will have well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills – with evidence of originality in tackling and solving problems, and in applying knowledge. Holders will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### Supplementary note

- The Exempting Degree in Law combines an academic stage of professional training with a post-academic stage of professional qualifying requirements (i.e. combining the LLB and Legal Practice Course (LPC)). The MArch is designed to lead to exemption from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Part 2 professional examination and to conform to the Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications set by the Architects' Registration Board (ARB). It is a graduate-level course open to applicants who already have a first degree in Architecture with exemption from RIBA/ARB Part 1 qualifications and who normally have had a minimum of a year's professional experience in architecture or related areas of design practice.

## 7. Honours Degree/Graduate Honours Degree

- 7.1 Honours graduates will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. They will have a systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and a critical understanding of the subject and its theories, principles and concepts, and will have the ability to understand, plan and apply appropriate research methodologies and techniques. Through this, graduates will have well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills. Graduates will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### Supplementary note

- The Graduate Honours Degree is reserved for courses that have a graduate intake but have outcomes at undergraduate level – typically known as graduate conversion courses. Holders

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of a Graduate Honours Degree will have achieved the award descriptors mentioned above but because of their graduate skills on entry will be able to achieve the honours degree outcomes at a faster pace; the notional study hours may therefore be less than the 3600 set for an honours degree that has an undergraduate intake.

### 8. Ordinary Degree

- 8.1 Ordinary degree graduates will have developed an understanding of the scope of a subject, its different areas and applications. They will have a detailed and comparative knowledge of aspects of the subject and an understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts of the subject as a whole. Through this, graduates will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills. In defined situations, graduates will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### 9. Professional Graduate Certificate in Education

- 9.1 Holders of a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE) will have developed knowledge, understanding and skills in the field of teaching and will have met the requirements for entry to, or for endorsement for entry to, the teaching profession in relation to those requirements for which the University has assessment responsibility. The definitive course information in CourseLoop will determine the precise level of academic and professional achievement. Candidates will be able to use diagnostic and analytical skills within the teaching context to review and consolidate specialist knowledge about learning and teaching. They will exercise judgement about the use of subject and professional knowledge within the context for which they have been trained. In professional situations, holders will be able to critically evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### 10. Graduate Diploma

- 10.1 Holders of a Graduate Diploma will have developed an understanding of those aspects of a subject required for entry into a professional field. In the required subject aspects, they will have a systematic and a critical understanding of the subject. Through this, holders will have well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills, as well as specific professional skills. In professional situations, holders will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

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### Supplementary note

- Graduate Diploma awards are associated with 'graduate conversion courses'. They enable graduates whose first degree is not in the recognised subject to 'convert' to the subject. Through these courses, students gain similar subject knowledge/skills to a graduate in the subject, not in all aspects but typically in those needed for professional recognition or for entry into a professional or employment field e.g. teaching, law or psychology. The course will normally cover the same ground as modules available on the first degree, but may incorporate level 7 modules where appropriate. It is likely that a limited number of graduate diploma courses will be approved.

## 11. Graduate Certificate

- 11.1 Holders of a Graduate Certificate will have developed an understanding of certain aspects of a subject required for entry into a professional field. In these aspects, they will have a systematic and a critical understanding of the subject, well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills, as well as professional skills. In defined professional situations, holders will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### Supplementary note

- Graduate Certificates are interim awards within graduate diploma courses.

## 12. Advanced Diploma

- 12.1 Holders of an Advanced Diploma will be able to demonstrate the learning outcomes set out in the definitive course information in CourseLoop that will have been approved with reference to the FHEQ level descriptors at level 6.

### Supplementary note

- Advanced diploma courses may range in volume from 40 to 120 credits and serve a number of academic and/or professional purposes. For example, it might be an 'exchange' course for overseas students, a 'niche' course designed to

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meet a funding initiative, a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) short course, etc. Courses that involve less than the full 120 credits will not be expected to meet the FHEQ level 6 descriptors in full.

### 13. Professional Diploma

- 13.1 Holders of a Professional Diploma will have developed knowledge, understanding and skills in a field of study that is related to professional and work-based practice. The definitive course information in CourseLoop will determine the precise level of academic and professional achievement. As a minimum, candidates will have gained a systematic and a critical understanding of the subject. Through this, holders will have well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills, as well as specific professional and work-based skills. In professional situations, holders will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

#### Supplementary note

- The Professional Diploma is an important award in the context of CPD. Courses leading to the award will involve the development of practice-orientated knowledge and skills, typically including work-based learning within professional and employment contexts. Such courses may prepare candidates for entry into the professional and employment field or may serve CPD purposes.
- Given the above, the award is not allocated to a specific level. It may comprise outcomes entirely at level 5 or level 6, or a mixture of the two levels - there may also be a contribution of up to 20 credits from level 7. The level(s) will need to be justified during the approval process, demonstrating that the level(s) selected fit with professional and employer needs. (See QHS 3B on professional diplomas and certificates).

### 14. Professional Certificate

- 14.1 Holders of a Professional Certificate will have developed knowledge, understanding and skills in aspects of a field of study that is related to professional and work-based practice. The definitive course information in CourseLoop will determine the precise level of academic and professional achievement. As a minimum, candidates will have gained a systematic and a critical understanding of aspects of the subject.



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Through this, holders will have well developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills, as well as specific professional and work-based skills. In defined professional situations, holders will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

### Supplementary note

- The Professional Certificate is an important award in the context of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Courses leading to the award will involve the development of practice-orientated knowledge and skills, typically including work-based learning within professional and employment contexts. Such courses may prepare candidates for entry into the field or may serve CPD purposes. Given this, the award is not allocated to a specific level. It may comprise outcomes entirely at level 5 or level 6, or a mixture of the two - there may also be a contribution from level 7. The level(s) will need to be justified during the approval process, demonstrating that the level(s) selected fit with professional and employer needs.
- A professional certificate may be designed as a distinct course or as an interim award within a professional diploma. In either case, the certificate involves less learning than a diploma (i.e. between 40 and 60 credits) and the aims and learning outcomes should reflect this. (See QHS 3B on professional diplomas and certificates).

## 15. Foundation Degree

- 15.1 Holders of a Foundation Degree will have developed and demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in a vocational area and undertaken a substantial element of work related and competency development. Successful students will demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge, competence and understanding of a broad range of complex technical/professional activities in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility, decision making and autonomy, and the ability to be responsible for the work of others. Successful students will also have academic knowledge and skills such as critical enquiry, analysis and evaluation, and will be able to apply these in the workplace.

## Supplementary note

- Please see para. 23 below for foundation degree policy.

## 16. Diploma of Higher Education

- 16.1 Holders of a Diploma of Higher Education will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will be able to communicate effectively and will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to problem solving.

## 17. Higher National Certificate/Higher National Diploma

- 17.1 Holders of a Higher National Certificate or Diploma will have developed and demonstrated knowledge, skills, and behaviours in a vocational area at level 4 or 5 respectively. These awards are widely recognised by employers and education authorities around the world as technical focused qualifications, that provide the flexibility to go straight into employment or further study. Successful students will demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge, practical skills, competence and understanding of a broad range of complex technical/professional activities in a wide variety of contexts. They will demonstrate a substantial degree of personal responsibility, decision making and autonomy, and the ability to be responsible for the work of others. Successful students will also have academic knowledge and skills such as critical enquiry, analysis, and evaluation, and will be able to apply these in the workplace.

## Supplementary note:

- Please see para. 25 below for Higher National Awards policy.

## 18. Certificate in Education

- 18.1 Holders of a Certificate in Education will have developed knowledge, understanding and skills in the field of teaching and will have met the requirements of entry, or for endorsement for entry to, the teaching profession in relation to those requirements for which the University has assessment responsibility. The definitive course information in CourseLoop will determine the precise level of academic and professional achievement. As a minimum, candidates will have gained a systematic understanding of teaching and be familiar with analytical techniques and problem solving skills as well as specific professional teaching skills relevant to the context in which they have trained. In professional situations, the holder will be able to differentiate between different forms of evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and communicate effectively.

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## **Supplementary note:**

- This award is currently available in the field of Post Compulsory Education and Training.

## **19. Diploma**

- 19.1 Holders of a Diploma will be able to demonstrate the learning outcomes set out in the definitive course information in CourseLoop that has been approved with reference to the FHEQ level descriptors at level 5.

## **Supplementary note**

- A course leading to a Diploma may range in volume from 40 to 120 credits and serve a number of academic and/or professional purposes, for example, an 'exchange' course for overseas students, a 'niche' course designed to meet a funding initiative, a CPD short course. As such, course teams will have significant flexibility in course design, provided it can be demonstrated that the outcomes are at level 5. Courses involving less than the full 120 credits will not be expected to meet the FHEQ level descriptors in full.

## **20. Certificate of Higher Education**

- 20.1 Holders of a Certificate of Higher Education will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts and principles of a subject. Through this, they will have learned how to communicate effectively and will have learned to take different approaches to problem solving.

## **21. Higher Certificate**

- 21.1 Holders of a Higher Certificate will have developed and demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in aspects of a vocational area and undertaken a significant element of work related and competency development. A successful student will demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge, competence and understanding of a range of complex technical/professional activities in a variety of contexts and with a degree of personal responsibility and autonomy and the ability to be responsible for the work of others.

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### Supplementary note

- A Higher Certificate is an interim award on a foundation degree course. Please see QHS 3A on foundation degrees for further information.

## 22. Certificate

- 22.1 Holders of a Certificate will be able to demonstrate the learning outcomes set out in the definitive course information in CourseLoop that has been approved with reference to the FHEQ level descriptors at level 4.

### Supplementary note

- A course leading to a Certificate may range in volume from 40 to 120 credits and serve a number of academic and/or professional purposes. For example, it might be an 'exchange' course for overseas students, a 'niche' course designed to meet a funding initiative, a CPD short course, etc. As such, course teams will have a significant amount of flexibility in course design provided it can be demonstrated that the outcomes are at level 4. Courses that involve less than the full 120 credits will not be expected to meet the FHEQ level descriptors in full.

## 23. Foundation Certificate

- 23.1 Holders of a Foundation Certificate will understand the basic theories and concepts of a subject field necessary for embarking upon a study of that subject at a higher education level. Through this, they will have demonstrated competency in a range of basic communication and learning skills.

### Supplementary note

- Due to the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) compliance or because of local custom and practice within which overseas partners operate, it is possible to offer a foundation or a diploma award rather than a foundation certificate award (subject to academic approval).

### 24. Foundation degree policy

- 24.1 Foundations degrees (FDs) should equip students with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, careers aspirations and the needs of employers. Course teams must engage with employers at all stages of the development, delivery and review of a FD course so it is relevant to employment, work and professional needs.
- 24.2 Work-based learning must be integral to a FD and flexibility of mode and delivery should underpin the development of all FD courses. Opportunities for a range of work-based and work-related learning must be explored by the course team when designing the new FD. Assessment must include elements of work-based learning and work-based and work-related learning must be reflected in the outcomes for the course.
- 24.3 A FD is a stand-alone award; however, they are designed to provide opportunities for students to progress to further academic study.
- 24.4 All FDs must have an articulated progression route to an Honours degree, typically into the final year with the time required to complete the qualification being comparable to that involved in a traditional bachelor's programme.
- 24.5 Progression routes should be identified at the outline stage of the business evaluation process.
- 24.6 Unless progression is from an NTU-delivered FD, all agreed progression routes should be documented formally in an Advanced Standing Agreement (ASA) signed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development & Performance) and the associated college Principal.
- 24.7 The progression arrangement should align the courses as closely as possible to achieve a single framework of progression. Entry onto an honours degree should not be conditional upon either a bridging course or module result.
- 24.8 Prior to starting their honours studies, progressing FD student may attend classes designed to improve skills such as:
  - a. Critical and analytical approaches;
  - b. Independent study skills;
  - c. Statistical analysis;
  - d. Dissertation preparation and writing.
- 24.9 The improvement of the future alignment of the two courses should be considered during the lifetime of the progression arrangement. The following points of good practice should be considered:
  - a. Alignment between learning outcomes from the FD to those of levels 4 and 5 of the honours degree, allowing direct progression to level 6;
  - b. Consideration of the differences in learning experiences and study approaches;

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- c. Consideration of the differences in access to resources.

## Supplementary note

- Readers should consult additional FD QH Supplements:  
QHS 3A Requirements for foundation degrees;  
QHS PS3 Requirements for foundation degree progression.

## 25. Higher National Awards policy

- 25.1 Higher National (HN) awards should equip students with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, careers aspirations and the needs of employers. Course teams must engage with employers at all stages of the development, delivery, and review of a HN course, so it remains relevant to employment, work, and professional needs.
- 25.2 Higher National (HN) awards are developed by Pearson PLC and are available at the University through an Intellectual Property and Trademark agreement. Consequentially, course teams must refer to Pearson subject specifications when developing course materials and assessments to ensure alignment with HN and where applicable Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) pathways.

## Supplementary note

- Please see QH 16F: Common Assessment Regulations for Higher National awards for HN grading descriptors and award classifications.

## 26. General grading descriptors for the classification of honours

- 26.1 An honours degree is awarded with one of the following classifications
- a. First Class
  - b. Upper Second Class
  - c. Lower Second Class
  - d. Third Class.
- 26.2 The University's grading descriptors set out the characteristics expected for each classification (see QHS 15A on Grade Based Assessment).

## 27. Designation of awards

27.1 Courses of study leading to honours and ordinary degrees may have a 'generic' designation, or a more closely defined award restricted to certain specific areas of study. The following 'generic' award designations are available:

- a. Bachelor of Arts (BA);
- b. Bachelor of Science (BSc).

27.2 The following 'specific' award designations are available:

- a. Bachelor of Architecture (BArch).
  - This award is reserved for courses that can demonstrate that they are geared towards an architecture curriculum that articulates with the QAA Subject Benchmarks in Architecture (2010), Architectural Technology (2014) and Landscape Architecture (2007), and the requirements of Part 1 of RIBA and ARB.
- b. Bachelor of Engineering (BEng).
  - This designation is reserved for courses which provide a technologically broad education with an emphasis on engineering applications, primarily those courses that may lead to registration with the Engineering Council.
- c. Bachelor of Laws (LLB).
  - This award is reserved for courses of specialised study in law or where law forms the major component in a combined course. Courses where legal and other studies are combined on a joint basis will lead to a BA or, where appropriate, BSc.
  - Students graduating with a LLB Graduate Honours Degree will receive the conventional Honours Degree designation but their degree certificate will include the words 'having followed a Graduate Honours course'.
- d. A Foundation Degree may have one of the following designations:
  - Foundation Degree in Arts (FdA);
  - Foundation Degree in Science (FdSc);
  - Foundation Degree in Engineering (FdEng).
- e. A Higher National Diploma may have one of the following designations:
  - Higher National Diploma (HND)
- f. Other award designations available are as follows:

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- Master of Architecture (MArch);
- Master of Chemistry (MChem);
- Master of Engineering (MEng);
- Master of Physics (MPhys);
- Master of Science (MSci);
- Master of Mathematics (MMath);
- Master of Biology (MBiol);
- Master of Computing (MComp);
- Master of Geography (MGeog);
- Master in Law (MLaw);
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE);
- Advanced Diploma (AdvDip);
- Professional Diploma (ProfDip);
- Professional Certificate (ProfCert);
- Graduate Diploma (GradDip);
- Graduate Certificate (GradCert);
- Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE);
- Higher National Certificate (HNC);
- Diploma (Dip);
- Certificate in Education (CertEd);
- Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE);
- Higher Certificate (HigherCert);
- Certificate (Cert).

- 27.3 The University has not adopted standard criteria to distinguish between BA and BSc awards (or between FdA, FdSc and FdEng awards). It would be extremely difficult to achieve agreement on such criteria given the different traditions and epistemological approaches within our academic disciplines. Instead, a course team will need to present a justification for the award designation as part of the Business Evaluation Process, and at academic approval event.
- 27.4 In subject fields where there is a sector convention that courses lead to only one designation – and the course is following such convention – a simple note to this effect is all that is required.
- 27.5 In subject fields where a course is veering from the sector convention, a thorough justification is required highlighting the special features of the course.
- 27.6 In subject fields where courses can conventionally lead to either a BA or BSc, a short justification is required for the chosen designation. Where the subject field has its own custom on the curriculum differences between a BA and BSc, the course team will be expected to agree with this.



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- 27.7 When drafting a 'justification', any guidance contained in the relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking statements should be used.
- 27.8 Additionally, in a course in which students can follow two pathways – one leading to BA and one to BSc – there should be sufficient difference in the curriculum followed by the two groups of students to justify the separate awards (as a guideline, there should be 60 credits difference in an honours course).
- 27.9 Course titles are subject to the rules set out in QHS 3C on Course Titling.

## Supplementary note

- Exempting degrees adopt individually tailored classification models, which are subject to academic approval.

<b>Policy owner</b>
CADQ

Change history			
Version:	Approval date:	Implementation date:	Nature of significant revisions:
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	Amendments to Foundation degree award descriptors Removal of generic NTU level descriptors and replacement with FHEQ Nov 2015
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	No major changes
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	Clarified that Integrated Master's degree must include 120 credits at level 7
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	New award designations of AET and CET added (interim awards in Post-Compulsory Education and Training only)
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	New award designations of HNC and HND added
Sept 2021	07.09.21	01.10.21	Minor updates to reference design sprints
Sept 2022	22.09.22	01.10.22	None
Oct 2022	29.11.22	29.11.22	Inclusion of award descriptors for HNC and HND. Higher Nationals Awards policy added.
Sept 2023	14.09.23	01.10.23	None

Equality Analysis		
Version:	EA date:	Completed by:
Jan 2015	08.12.14	CADQ
Sept 2018	01.10.18	CADQ