HEI Learning Levels

There is an expectation within Higher Education that students’ learning will progress throughout the time they spend at university. In order to reflect this progression the learning outcomes for each year are expressed in different terms. This development should also be reflected in the descriptors used for the placement assessments in years 2 and 3.

First year undergraduate degree standard (Level 4):
At this level students are expected to be able to show a clear understanding of the assessment task and its appropriateness in terms of the objectives of the module, to be able to demonstrate relevant skills and competencies; to be articulate in expressing ideas orally, and coherent and structured in terms of written or visual media.

It is reasonable to expect that to an extent the varied forms of expression at this level may be descriptive or imitative. Nevertheless, students should be able to show an increasing understanding of the theoretical background of their study and its relationship, where appropriate, to particular skills. Additionally, evidence of the development of analytic competence would be anticipated. An awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses in the areas with which they are involved should be expected.

Learning outcomes at Level 4 will often be expressed using terms such as: arrange, describe, explain, critique, summarise, illustrate, paraphrase, define, list, state, select, discuss, take part, copy, follow repeat, recreate, build, perform, demonstrate, implement.

Second year undergraduate degree standard (Level 5):
This level is characterised by greater learner independence and development of competence. Evidenced by ability in problem solving skills (both theoretical and practical), supported by an understanding of appropriate theory. There should be evidence of creativity of expression and thought based in individual judgement; the ability to seek out, invoke, analyse and evaluate competing theories or methods of working in a critically constructive and open manner. The potential of the individual as innovator in relation to his/her specialist area would be anticipated. Necessarily there is an expectation that at this level output is articulate and coherent and skilled in the appropriate medium.

Typically, learning outcomes will be expressed using expressions such as: use, apply, discover, solve, implement, construct, prepare, conduct, role-play, interpret, clarify, contribute, question, argue, debate, solve integrate, adapt.

Third year undergraduate degree standard (Level 6):
This level is characterised by higher academic skills, reflective practice, independent learning and assessment at honours degree standard.

Typically learning outcomes are expressed using expressions such as: analyse, deconstruct, quantify, measure, test, develop, evaluate, plan, formulate, propose, review, justify, appraise, argue, design, respond, challenge, persuade, defend, reconcile, prioritise, contrast, compare, synthesise, research - usually secondary as opposed to original research.