
Section 4

Understanding Levels, Credit and Areas of Learning

Aim

An introduction to academic credit, levels of learning and level descriptors

Objectives

- Identify and use the different levels of learning;
- Reflect on learning and relate to appropriate levels

Key words / concepts:

academic credit (university level) - Academic credit is the formal recognition of learning, expressed in terms of a number of credit points, at a particular level (Level 4 = Certificate of Higher Education, Level 5 = Foundation Degree, Level 6 = Bachelors Degree, Level 7 = Masters Degree). 1 credit point is equivalent to 10 notional hours of study.

level descriptor - A level descriptor describes the complexity of learning expected at qualification level in higher education (university) levels.

areas of learning (AOL) – Underlying and informing the specifics of what you do, there will be generic skills, abilities and knowledge that you have learned. These areas of expertise can be categorised into themes or topics, which we are calling ‘areas of learning’.

The importance of level descriptors

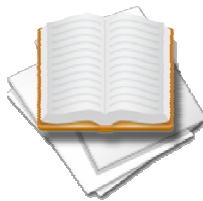
These are used to determine the Higher Education level of your experiential learning. Details of requirements at each level can be found at the end of the section.

To assess your written work, i.e. the reflective essay, we will use assessment criteria which describe the academic expectations at different levels. These criteria are central to the Professional Practice Framework and you will find that you are expected to develop your work during your programme to reflect these in other modules. These are shown in Section 7 and are derived from the Quality Assurance Agency's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/default.asp>.

Credit rated learning, reflection and action planning

By this stage you should have completed your CV and job description and be working on the following:



An exercise in preparing an action plan for the completion of the work for the module

- Considering reflection and reflective frameworks (Section 2)
- Reading the explanatory notes and resources which will support you at this stage of the module.



- Drafting a list of areas of learning
- Considering the relationship between the theory and practice of learning from experience
- Researching and summarising your credit rated learning



Review

As this module is possibly your first experience of Work Based Learning Studies and even of Higher Education, it is important for you and your Adviser to undertake a review at this stage. This is to ensure that you have the opportunity to express any concerns, anxieties or particular issues impeding you on the module. Time taken now may very well save time at later stages.

Credit rated learning

Have you any relevant credit-rated learning?

Your portfolio is a claim for academic credit. This has a specific meaning and should not be confused with levels used in Further Education. Credit rated learning is for a course which has an academic credit at higher education level e.g. another course at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, other UK Higher Education Institutions or with a recognised professional body at HE level 4 or above or NVQ at levels 4 or 5. However, you may have completed a course which has already received academic recognition through the awarding of credit. This can be included in your portfolio if it is relevant to the focus of your claim. In this case, you are not asking University of Wales Trinity Saint David to *give* you credit for this learning, but to *recognise* the credit it already carries.

The following points should help you decide whether you already have relevant credit rated learning.

There are a number of different courses which are likely to carry academic credit:

- Academic qualifications such as an HNC or postgraduate certificate
- College courses / modules. For example, you may have done a course from an Open College programme. If a course carries academic credit, it is likely to say so on the associated certificate, and to indicate the amount and level.

Credit gained as a result of courses undertaken more than five years ago is not generally counted since such courses do not necessarily show that this learning is still current. They should still be listed in your CV. However, the learning from such courses need not be wasted. It is best used within an 'area of learning'. Here, you can show how you have *applied* the learning from these past courses, and thus how you now have *more* learning than was the case when you took the course.



Reminder - It is your responsibility to establish whether courses of study you have completed are credit rated or not. The way to do this is to contact the awarding body or HEI as appropriate and ask them for a statement of the award's equivalence in higher education credits, i.e. at level 4 and above; up to level 3 counts as further education. It is best to do this as soon as possible in case there are delays in getting a response.



Adding credit rated learning to your portfolio

Purpose

To use learning that has already been credit rated in your RAL portfolio

What you should do

1. From the information above, decide whether you have any credit-rated learning. Check with your RAL AA if you are not sure.
2. If you wish to include credit rated learning in your portfolio you should give details of each course (syllabus, duration) and a certified copy of the certificate must be included. You will be asked to show your RAL AA the original certificate. The amount of credit each course bears will be added to the credit you gain from your areas of learning.



Reminder - check that any relevant non-credit rated courses you have completed are listed in your CV or job description as appropriate. Remember, you can use these as supporting evidence for areas of learning.



Developing an Action Plan

Purpose

- To give you an initial overview of what your portfolio must contain.
- To make you aware of the tasks you need to do in order to complete your portfolio.
- To help you to plan your time.

Most learners who make a RAL claim have to juggle a number of competing responsibilities both at work and in the home, in addition to their studies. The aim of this exercise is to help you get a clear understanding of what is required of you in this module. With this information at the outset, you are likely to be able to plan your time as efficiently as possible. This exercise is not an assessed part of your work, simply an aid to using your time effectively. We strongly advise you to make use of the exercise in the way that will be most helpful to you, and to update your plan as circumstances change.

What is an action plan?

An action plan is a document produced by you and designed to identify a route to a chosen goal. An action plan should be SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time bound

What you should do

1. Read the summary of each stage in the handbook. These give you an overview of what the handbook contains, stage by stage. Each of these summarises the content and tasks associated with a particular stage of compiling your portfolio.
2. Think about the following information:
 - The deadline for handing in your RAL portfolio. If you do not know when this is refer to your RAL AA.
 - Your work and home commitments.
 - The approximate percentages of your time required for the tasks involved in producing your claim, which are as follows.

<i>Task</i>	<i>% of Your Time</i>
<i>CV, Job description, credit rated learning</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>List of titles for areas of learning</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Working up one area of learning</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Working up your remaining areas of learning</i>	<i>45</i>



Reminder - Remember that you also need time to write a reflective essay. Check the word length in the Module Descriptors.

3. Using all the information above, write an action plan or timetable for yourself. You may like to use the module schedule at the front as a guide. Note that you will need to spend the largest proportion of your time on the tasks related to your areas of learning. The reflective essay is equivalent to 150 hours of study so plan in regular study time. As you write your action plan, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:
 - Shall I set aside time each day or periodically (say, once a week) for this activity?
 - Do I need to build in worry time or time for possible commitments I do not yet know about?
 - Do I have a contingency plan?
 - Is my plan SMART?
4. Remember that you can revise your action plan as you progress through the module.

What are areas of learning?

You have looked at your experience in a familiar way - most of us have an idea of what a CV and a job description might look like. Both CVs and job descriptions structure experience in terms of roles and activities - they are about what you do. Underlying and informing the specifics of what you do, there will be generic skills, abilities and knowledge that you have learned. These areas of expertise can be categorised into themes or topics, which we are calling 'areas of learning'.

'Areas of learning' consist of non-overlapping categories of skills, abilities and/or knowledge. This may appear somewhat artificial because, in your actual experience, the different parts of your learning are interwoven with each other and with your roles and activities.

In developing a CV you thought about your work-based and other experience chronologically. In developing a list of areas of learning you need to think thematically about your experience, and to pick out recurring themes of learning which you can then group together into 'areas'. For example, a person may look across their work experience and see that they have learned how to teach young adults. They may have developed this area of learning through a number of activities, such as teaching maths in a secondary school, running a youth group, and teaching a son or daughter how to play the flute. Each of these activities may have increased the person's teaching abilities.

It is the generic areas of knowledge and skill that you write up in your areas of learning which are assessed for credit, not the activities you listed in your CV and job description.

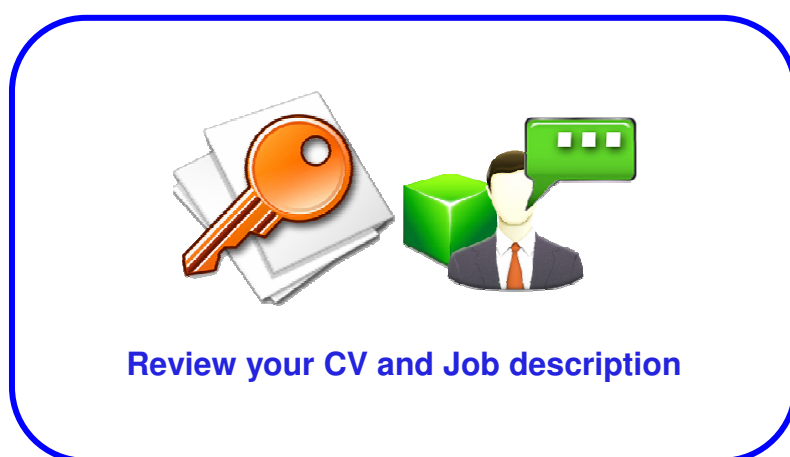
In summary, there are two ways in which we have asked you to think about your experience in developing your RAL portfolio:

CV and job description	Areas of Learning
What you do	What your knowledge and skills are
Your specific activities	The generic learning underpinning your activities
Looking at experience chronologically	Looking at experience thematically
<i>Purpose in portfolio:</i> to provide contextualising information on your work and other experience	<i>Purpose in portfolio:</i> to claim academic credit for experiential learning

Finding Areas of Learning

To claim credit you must compile an 'area of learning'. Areas of learning come from both experience and formal taught learning that you have acquired from a combination of sources, such as training days, experiences from work or voluntary activity, reading or investigating for specific activities such as projects. Sometimes it is not easy to find out where this learning started, but to be able to claim credits it is important to identify it, trace its development, and find the evidence that supports it, so that you can put together a sound claim.

To start to find areas of learning (AOL):



Now you have compiled and annotated an up to date CV and job description it is useful to consider the following points:

In your CV

- are there themes emerging, such as teaching, managing, counselling, budgeting or similar?
- what sort of patterns of work activities are reflected in your job changes, promotions or career changes?
- have you been doing particular types of work such as organising others, managing projects, providing administrative support? If so, where did this learning trail start? Can you see how your choices of work and activity developed particular knowledge and skills in you?
- can you explain in your annotated CV how each job built on the previous one?
- are you involved in particular types of voluntary work or hobbies? If so, are the activities you use for them similar to, or different from, the activities you do at work?
- what continuous professional development or training have you been involved in?

In your job description

- what are you doing now that you were not doing 5 years ago?
- what new things have you learned in the last two years?
- what responsibilities do you have at work?
- have you developed any trans-disciplinary skills e.g. negotiating skills, managing people?
- have you developed specific skills such as communication or project management? Did these grow through specific work practices and activities?
- what do you consider to be the routine parts of your work? How did you learn to do them? Did you need formal training or have you learned them over a period of time? Are there many people in your work environment who could do your job? If not, why not?
- why do people ask your advice? What sort of things do they ask you?

Relevance of your areas of learning to your future plans

Deciding on a list of areas of learning involves looking back over your experience to date. You are likely to have developed a great deal of skills, ability and knowledge over the years. How can you decide what to use as areas of learning in your portfolio?

The answer to this is that your areas of learning should be relevant to where you want to go in the future - particularly to any further study you may like to do once you have completed this module. For example, if you are thinking of using the RAL credit you gain towards a Professional Practice qualification, you will return to your areas of learning throughout your programme:

- In the Work-based Learning Programme Plan module, you will develop a customised programme of study to which your areas of learning must be relevant. You will also begin to think about a topic for your Work-based Project module. Your areas of learning should help to guide you towards a topic.
- In the Research Methods module you will develop a proposal for your work-based project.
- Then you will complete the work based project itself.

In short, your areas of learning can form a foundation on which you will eventually build a whole programme of academic study. In the light of your consideration of the above it may be a good time to re-visit your action plan.



Making a Provisional List of Titles for your Areas of Learning

Purpose

- To critically evaluate your past and current experiential learning for underpinning skills and knowledge
- From this evaluation, to generate a list of titles for areas of learning.

What you should do

1. Think about the information given above.
2. Prepare a provisional list of titles for your areas of learning. In addition to the explanatory notes above, you will probably find the following suggestions useful:

- your CV and job description(s): look for significant operational areas/skills in your job description(s); look for areas of major work/interest/activity in your CV (including unpaid/voluntary and leisure activities)

in order to be specific about knowledge, skills and learning outcomes, you might wish to think about your learning against related module descriptions in the other TSD modules, QAA Subject Benchmark statements and/or NVQ Standards. You should remember that such descriptions are only guides and that you are not necessarily seeking an exact match. QAA Benchmark Statements can be found by following this link:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp.

You may want to ask yourself the following question: 'If I go on to undertake a university programme of study, what topic do I want to explore in my dissertation or project?'

- A list of between 4 and 8 titles is appropriate at this preliminary stage.

Finding titles for your areas of learning

1. Having read through the above you may already have identified a preliminary list of areas of learning and some titles may begin to emerge, such as 'managing a budget', 'creating databases', 'working with people'. All titles should be short and unambiguous. Make a list of your titles so far and see where there are overlaps or similarities between titles.

Examples of titles are:

'Managing projects'
'Teaching literacy and numeracy'
'Building business relationships'
'Operational management'

2. Begin to consider what evidence you could use to substantiate your claim for learning and achievement in these areas e.g. testimonials, reports, appraisal reports, correspondence from and to you, artefacts (e.g. photographs/video tape, products). (Section 5).
3. Discuss your list of titles and evidence with your RAL Academic Adviser. It is very important to get feedback on your initial ideas for areas of learning before you start to develop them. Your Adviser will be able to tell you whether or not your ideas at this stage are likely to result in areas of learning of appropriate size, content and academic level.
4. Make a revised list of titles for your areas of learning and insert this list of titles into your portfolio. They should go on the standard first page. This list of titles and your ideas about how to substantiate them with evidence will form the basis of exercises. (Section 5)

Your areas of learning are likely to form the core of your portfolio. They contain the claim for academic credit which you will make from your experiential learning. In choosing what your areas of learning are you will look at your past and current achievements. From all this experience you will select themes or areas where you can identify your learning.

Understanding credit levels



Having completed your CV and Job description you should be working on the following:

- Understanding academic credit
- Identifying learning at different levels
- Developing your work on areas of learning

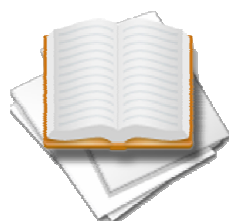
EXPLANATORY NOTES AND EXERCISES

Understanding Academic Credit

The notes below give you general background on what academic credit is and supplement the information in your student handbook. This is important, because you are making a claim for academic credit in your RAL portfolio. You should therefore begin to get an idea of *what* levels of credit there are and *how much* credit you think you can claim for. You do not have to understand it all now and it will become clearer as you work on your portfolio, particularly the 'Areas of Learning'. You can also ask your RAL AA for clarification.

The Academic Credit Scheme

Your RAL portfolio contains your claim for academic credit. Your areas of learning will be matched against the 'Level Descriptors' with a view to awarding you a certain amount of credit. This may be at more than one level to reflect different degrees of complexity.



For further details look at these two references from the QAA website:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/academicCredit/AcademicCredit.pdf>

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf>

It is essential you download, read and understand these documents when making your claim.

You may also find it useful to look at publications on the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales which is currently under review. These may be found at the following site:

http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/Learning_and_Teaching/framework.htm

See also 'Credit and Learning Wales' at the end of this section.

Nationally recognised academic qualifications have standard values expressed in terms of credit points and levels. For example, a Masters degree requires 180 credit points (of which 150 must be at Level 7 and 30 can be at Level 6 or above). The scheme covers the whole range of College awards. The amount and levels of credit required to gain one of these awards is given in the following table. Up to two thirds of any award can be achieved through RAL credit.

Credit can be achieved in different ways, depending on what the individual has already achieved through certificated learning and/or can claim from work-based and experiential learning.

Reminder:

1 credit = 10 hours of learning

Modules can vary from 10 – 60 credits per module. The total number of credits, required to achieve an Award is standard and as seen from the table there are a range of Awards which can be achieved. The following Model shows the actual number of credits required for the more traditional Awards.

Level 4 = First Year Higher Education	AWARD *
120 credits	= Certificate in HE

Level 4 = First Year Higher Education	PLUS	Level 5 = Second Year Higher Education	AWARD *
120 credits		120 credits	= Foundation Degree

Level 4 = First Year Higher Education	PLUS	Level 5 = Second Year Higher Education	PLUS	Level 6 = Third Year Higher Education	AWARD *
120 credits		120 credits		120 credits	BA (Hons)

These Awards can be achieved in a variety of ways through the Professional Practice Framework and work based learning.

Example 1 – Certificate of Higher Education

Level 4

Level equivalent to the first year of a degree programme.

Maximum Two – thirds RAL credit	PLUS	New Learning	AWARD *
80 Credits at Level 4		40 credits at Level 4	= Certificate in HE

Example 2 – Certificate of Higher Education

Level 4

Level equivalent to the first year of a degree programme.

Maximum Two – thirds RAL credit		PLUS	New Learning	AWARD *
30 credits at Level 3	50 Credits at Level 4		40 credits at Level 4	= Certificate in HE

Example 3 – Foundation Degree

Level 4

plus

Level 5

Level 4 = First Year Higher Education	PLUS	Level 5 = Second Year Higher Education	AWARD *
120 credits		120 credits	= Foundation Degree
RAL = Maximum 80 Credits		RAL = Minimum 80 credits	
PLUS 40 Credits		PLUS 40 Credits	

Example 4 – BA (Hons)



Level 4 = First Year Higher Education		Level 5 = Second Year Higher Education		Level 6 = Third Year Higher Education	AWARD *
120 credits		120 credits		120 credits	
RAL = Maximum 80 Credits	PLUS	RAL = Maximum 80 Credits	PLUS	Minimum = 80 Credits	= BA (Hons)
PLUS 40 Credits		PLUS 40 Credits		PLUS 40 Credits	

Example 5 – Postgraduate Certificate



Level 7	AWARD *
60 Credits	
RAL = Maximum 40 Credits	= Postgraduate Certificate
PLUS 20 Credits	

Example 6 – Postgraduate Diploma

Level 7	AWARD *
120 Credits	= Postgraduate Diploma
RAL = Maximum 80 Credits	
PLUS 40 Credits	

Example 7 – MA

Level 7	AWARD*
180 Credits	= MA
RAL = Maximum 120 Credits	
PLUS 60 Credits	

* = A work-based project is an essential component of each Award.

Amount and level of credit required for each award offered by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The following table shows the minor and full awards available at each level:

<i>Level</i>	<i>Statement of Achievement/Awards</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Distribution of credits</i>
4	<i>Statement of Achievement (Academic Transcript stating modules and volume of credit)</i>	<i><60 credits at level 4</i>	
4	<i>TSD Certificate awarded</i>	<i>60 credits at level 4</i>	
4	<i>Certificate of Higher Education awarded</i>	<i>120 credits</i>	<i>120 credits, maximum 30 credits at level 3 and minimum 90 credits at level 4</i>
5	<i>Statement of Achievement (Academic Transcript stating modules and volume of credit)</i>	<i>level 5 <60 credits</i>	
5	<i>TSD Diploma awarded</i>	<i>60 credits at level 5</i>	
5	<i>Foundation Degree awarded</i>	<i>240 credits</i>	<i>120 credits at level 5</i>
6	<i>Statement of Achievement (Academic Transcript stating modules and volume of credit)</i>	<i>level 6 <60 credits</i>	
6	<i>TSD Advanced Diploma awarded</i>	<i>60 credits at level 6</i>	
6	<i>Graduate Certificate (graduate entry) awarded</i>	<i>60 credits at level 6</i>	
6	<i>Graduate Diploma (graduate entry) awarded</i>	<i>120 credits at level 6</i>	
6	<i>Honours Degree awarded</i>	<i>360 credits</i>	<i>360 credits, including a minimum of 120 at each of levels 5 and 6. Maximum of 30 credits at level 3 and remaining credits at level 4</i>
7	<i>Statement of Achievement (Academic Transcript stating modules and volume of credit)</i>	<i>level 7 <60 credits</i>	
7	<i>Postgraduate Certificate</i>	<i>60 credits</i>	<i>Maximum of 20 credits at level 6 and minimum of 40 credits at level 7</i>
7	<i>Postgraduate Diploma</i>	<i>120 credits</i>	<i>Maximum of 30 credits at level 6; minimum of 90 credits and maximum of 120 credits at level 7</i>
7	<i>Master's Degree</i>	<i>180 credits</i>	<i>Maximum of 30 credits at level 6; minimum of 150 credits and maximum of 180 credits at level 7</i>

The advantages of the Academic Credit Scheme to the individual learner

The individual learner can:

- Gain credit for relevant prior learning, including work-based learning - this could shorten the length of study required for a particular qualification and thus reduce the tuition fee required. *Your RAL portfolio is about gaining this kind of credit.*
- Choose from the extensive range of modules offered by TSD and, within certain rules, determine an individual programme of study leading to a particular qualification.
- Take advantage of credit transfer to enter or leave a programme according to individual need, at a variety of different points.
- Take advantage of ongoing credit accumulation to change your mode of study/desired qualification in response to differing work or individual requirements.

Example of an Area of Learning

The example given shows the way an area of learning graded at Level 7 was presented. It is prefaced by a short commentary on the way the area of learning has been presented. It has been adequately presented - that is it meets the requirements stipulated. However, Areas of Learning vary considerably, not only in topic but also in the way the writers have chosen to present their learning.

There is no right way of presenting your areas of learning, providing you meet the layout requirements.

Example

Here is an example of how *part* of an 'area of learning' entitled 'Planning Learning and Development Opportunities' was presented.

Part of the 'analysis of learning' is given overleaf. Some of the reasons why this strategy for presenting the claimant's learning is successful are apparent in the extract given below:

- The area of learning is sub-divided into parts - (1) and (2) are given. This allows each aspect of the learning comprising this area of learning to be detailed separately.
- The area of learning is discussed in relation to an illustrative case study - planning a training day for appraisers of teaching. This gives the skills and knowledge described, (i.e. the learning), a grounding in the claimant's actual work experience.
- Each aspect of learning is supported by evidence. Parts (1) and (2) use the same piece of evidence - the Appraisal Training Day programme. It is perfectly acceptable to use the same piece of evidence more than once. This is particularly successful in this instance because the claimant has written a short commentary stating how the evidence is illustrating the learning claimed for. Evidence is rarely self-explanatory and a commentary or short explanation is therefore important.

The example:

Analysis of Learning and Relationship to Evidence

1. Understanding of the dynamics of in-house training sessions

I knew from my experience of running staff development in-house that participants would want to spend some time discussing their particular context and the threats/constraints they perceived it to impose. I judged that this could cause negativity if allowed to happen early in the session. I therefore began with relatively neutral material to do with clarifying what was meant by 'teaching' in their appraisal context, and moved quickly into small group analysis of videoed teaching scenarios. This concentration on the task carried considerable momentum. Once a positive orientation had been established I made space for personal disclosure, part of the function of the day being to allow expression of anxieties. The energy generated by the small group work, and the fact that they had dealt successfully with the simulation, helped to increase confidence and minimise the perception of threat.

Evidence:

Appraisal Day Programme: This shows how I managed the balance of the day to allow for information giving, activity and expression of feeling in ways which allowed the business to be completed and people's sensitivities to be respected.

2. Skill in creating one-off training days

The challenge of the single day's training is to manage the expectations of the group. I used experience drawn from being a trainer and being a participant in training groups to create a pattern for this day which would meet the expectations and also allow some additional action planning. I drew on lessons learned through involvement in conference planning for the 'X' Association. The key conditions for effective training events include:

- clear statements of objectives/learning outcomes
- knowledgeable, accurate, up to date input
- relevant activities, suited to the type of participant
- excellent timekeeping
- good quality learning/briefing materials
- a closing section which both summarises and looks forwards.

I followed these precepts closely. I began by checking that the objectives were appropriate and at the mid point I checked that we were on target to meet them. The evaluation at the end asked whether they had been met. My input was based on knowledge of appraisal systems in education and training contexts, and the essence of the session was simulation activities to build confidence as well as expertise. The session ended with action planning for

further development. The degree of satisfaction expressed after the session suggested that the planning decisions were appropriate. I followed up the session with.... (contd.)

Evidence:

Programme as above: This shows how I followed recommended good practice in creating a training session which needed to be complete in itself, i.e. meet its objectives within a given time/place.

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Level 4

1. Responsibility for courses of action and their results, including wider impacts.
2. Thinking through and choosing courses of action.
3. Coping effectively with a range of unfamiliar situations and problems.
4. Recognising the implications of different issues and courses of action.
5. Identifying and evaluating the practical effects and impact of operating parameters.
6. Acting on understandings of relationships and contradictions between principles and ideas.
7. Investigating, analysing and evaluating information to identify relationships and make informed judgements.
8. Reinterpreting and combining information to develop ideas and choose courses of action or develop ways forward.
9. Designing investigations to provide new information and affect practice, including through practical investigation.
10. Evaluating the appropriateness of different approaches and their impacts.
11. Producing own ideas and developing innovative responses.
12. Developing novel solutions to problems.

Level 5

1. Responsibility across a broad area rather than for individual tasks, including for negotiating objectives and outcomes and for their wider impacts.
2. Developing thought through courses of action.
3. Coping effectively with a range of unfamiliar situations and problems.
4. Understanding the implications of different issues and courses of action.
5. Identifying dilemmas and value conflicts.
6. Identifying and evaluating the effects and impact of operating parameters and principles.
7. Drawing on a broad personal or formal knowledge base and set of mental models relating to the area of practice.
8. Developing practical theories, ideas and models including to find ways forward when faced with contradictions and gaps in theories.
9. Researching, analysing and evaluating information to identify relationships and patterns and make informed judgements.
10. Designing practical research to provide new information and affect areas of practice.
11. Evaluating the effects of options and actions, including impacts outside of the immediate context.
12. Taking innovative approaches to address issues.
13. Developing novel solutions to sets of problems.

Level 6

1. Responsibility across a broad area including for planning, resourcing and quality as well as for outcomes and their immediate and wider impacts.
2. Developing thought through courses of action.
3. Working effectively in complex and unpredictable contexts.
4. Understanding the implications of different issues and courses of action.
5. Understanding and managing dilemmas and value conflicts.
6. Identifying interrelationships between wider systems in which the area of practice is located.
7. Drawing on a broad personal or formal knowledge base and set of mental models relating to the area of practice.
8. Developing and evaluating a range of practical theories, ideas and models, including finding ways forward in problematic situations.
9. Researching, analysing and evaluating information to identify relationships and patterns and make informed judgements.
10. Designing practical, methodically sound research to provide new information and affect areas of practice.
11. Evaluating the actual and potential effect of theories and actions, including impacts outside of the immediate context.
12. Taking innovative approaches in complex situations.
13. Developing novel approaches to systems.

Level 7

1. Full responsibility for methods, actions and immediate and wider impacts which extend beyond the immediate area of practice.
2. Developing thought through courses of action which take into account issues beyond the immediate area of practice.
3. Working effectively in problematic contexts which contain value-conflicts and uncertainties which extend beyond the immediate area of practice.
4. Understanding alternative implications of different issues and courses of action.
5. Understanding and managing dilemmas and value conflicts.
6. Understanding and acting on interrelationships between wider systems in which the area of practice is located.
7. Using mastery of knowledge relating to and extending into the wider context of the area of practice.
8. Developing and critically evaluating a range of practical theories, ideas and models, including overcoming dilemmas and finding ways forward in problematic situations.
9. Researching, analysing and evaluating information to identify interrelationships between wider systems in which the area of practice is located.
10. Undertaking substantial investigation to address significant areas of practice, using methodologies which are consistent with their purposes and contexts.
11. Critically evaluating thinking, action and structural factors operating in the area of practice, including underlying assumptions, and identifying implications for wider systems beyond the area of practice.
12. Developing innovative ways forward in complex and unpredictable situations.
13. Developing novel approaches to systems.

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What is credit?

Credit and Learning in Wales

Credit is a currency for learning achievement that provides a measure of **learning outcomes** achievable in learning time at a given level. An award is made to learners in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level.

Level descriptors are used as an indicator of the demand, complexity and depth of study. These descriptors are accepted across Wales, England and Northern Ireland and ensure that learning can be located at the correct level. They span the full spectrum of learning from Entry level to postgraduate learning at level 8.

Credit is used to summarise and describe an amount of **learning time**. One credit is awarded for every 10 hours of learning time. The credit value is fixed at the point of recognition of the learning programme. In the CQFW a **module** is a discrete and coherent block of learning, a **unit** is the smallest part of learning that can be separately certificated. A unit would normally incorporate a title and learning 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

The Unit provides a simple way of indicating, using numbers, the amount of learning and how difficult it is. The unit format also enables comparison of learning between different units and **qualifications**, as all achievements are expressed as learning outcomes.

What are level descriptors?

When is credit awarded?

Credit is awarded to learners who have shown that they have successfully completed a block of learning. To do this, they need to meet the specific set of learning outcomes for that block of learning.

Learning outcomes outline what a successful learner will know, understand and be able to do as a result of the learning experience.

It is the achievement of the learning outcomes that is important for the award of credit, not how or where the learning took place, or how it was assessed, or how long it actually took.

Learners will need to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of a module, unit or qualification by completing different types of assessment(s).

To be awarded the credits, a learner must reach the minimum standard, also known as the threshold or pass, in the assessment(s). The minimum standard expected to achieve the learning outcomes is set out in an awarding body's assessment requirements or regulations.

The number of credits awarded to a student is determined by the **credit value** assigned to a module, a unit or a whole qualification.

Exceeding the minimum standard does not result in a student being awarded more credits as the credit value is fixed before assessment.

Recognition of partial achievement within qualifications (i.e. achievement of some of the units required) will be recognised. This allows learners to build credit achievement over time towards a qualification or other learning aim.

The credit indicates both 'how much' learning (the outcome(s)) is expected and 'how hard' it is (at what level – level descriptors). Each module or unit has only one level for its credit (between Entry level and level 8);

Credit

The credit value
(e.g. 10 credits at Level 4 means)



Learning time

Level (4)

(10 credits @ 10 hours of learning for each = 100 hours of learning)
Indicates both the amount and level of learning

The credit is validated and set before any student begins their studies for a block of learning. Once a student has successfully achieved the required learning outcomes they can be awarded all of the credits at a specified credit level for that block of learning

Learning time

The amount of learning indicated by a credit value is determined by considering the overall learning time required.

All modules, units and qualifications have learning outcomes that outline what a learner will know, understand and/or be able to do once they have successfully completed the block of learning.

The amount of learning time indicates how long it will take a typical learner to achieve these learning outcomes. All types of learning activity are included in the estimate of learning time, including formal learning, practical activities, relevant information technology activity, information retrieval, self study, revision, work based activities which lead to assessment and assessment associated with teaching.

If a student takes more or less time than estimated to complete the learning they will still be awarded the set credit value – not more or less. If a student starts but does not complete any unit or module (they do not achieve all of the learning outcomes for that block of learning) they are not awarded the credits for that learning.

Example of how credit is assigned to modules

A module that involves **150 hours** of learning time for a typical student and has been designed with reference to the credit **level descriptors** of how challenging the learning is at level 4, will be assigned a credit value of **15 credits at level 4**.

A module that involves **100 hours** of learning time for a typical student and has been designed with reference to the credit **level descriptors** of how challenging the learning is at Level 5, will be assigned a credit value of **10 credits at level 5**.

Once a student has successfully demonstrated that they have met the learning outcomes of the module they can be awarded the 15 credits at level 4, or 10 credits at level 5, assigned to this module by the awarding body.

Credit and qualifications

Different qualifications reflect different levels of difficulty in the learning involved, for example, the learning for a level 4 is less complex than for a Master's Degree level 7. The amount and the difficulty of the work involved in gaining a qualification is reflected in the overall credit value and the combination of credit achievement requirements.

Typical* minimum credit values of some further education/higher education qualifications

- Bachelor's degree total of 360 credits with a minimum at honours of 90 at level 6.
- Foundation degree total of 240 credits with a minimum of 90 at level 5.
- Certificate of Higher Education total of 120 credits with a minimum of 90 at level 4.

** actual numbers can vary between particular awards.*

For further details refer to *Higher Education in Wales Credit Specification & Guidance*, June 2004

Credit transfer

Institutions and awarding bodies have recognition arrangements that can allow learners to transfer relevant credits they have been awarded. Learners may be able to transfer the credits they have been awarded as part of one study programme to another, offered by the same institution, and/or transfer credit when moving from one institution to another within Wales, UK and Europe.

The ways learners can transfer credits is determined by each institution's assessment regulations.

Some institutions describe credit as either general or specific to a particular programme. This may be important if a student wants to transfer the credit they have been awarded in one programme, to a programme in a different subject area or in a different institution.

Learners will need to discuss any potential transfer possibilities with all institutions involved.

Each institution can provide its learner with a record of their accumulated credits. In many cases this is in the form of a transcript. This record can be a particularly useful document for learners who want to learn slowly in bite sized chunks, to take a break from learning and return to study later, or transfer their credits.

Learning that takes place, for example in the workplace or in the voluntary sector, can also be formally recognised for the award of credit by an appropriate higher education institutions (HEI), professional institution or awarding body. This is done through a process known as the **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**, also referred to as **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**. In Wales the Centre for Strategic Development of Recognised Prior Learning engages the need for higher level learning in the Welsh workforce to boost the economic competitiveness of Wales. It aims to extend the opportunities for potential learners in the Welsh workforce of engaging in higher education via the use of innovative blended learning and learning recognition activities. This allows the Welsh HEIs to develop the assessing and accrediting of work based learning. For further information contact: www.cqfw.net

Credit and quality assurance

It is essential that there is confidence in the way in which the credit value for each block of learning is set. The amount of credit awarded is based on the required learning outcomes, irrespective of the type of learning, the place or

other context in which the learning takes place, or the way in which the learning is assessed. All institutions that use credit follow the same national guidelines for awarding credit.

There must also be confidence in the quality assurance processes that underpin the teaching, learning and assessment that result in the award of credit. These assurances are provided by the institution's own internal quality assurance mechanisms and externally by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) through their audit and review processes.

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