

Part 8: Appendices

Appendix C: Outcome classification descriptions

Extract from: [Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England - Office for Students](#)

An explanation of each classification

Students are assessed against the learning outcomes of their course and modules, with the curriculum providing opportunities to develop, practice and achieve the outcomes and demonstrate the characteristics associated with the level of learning of the stage of study and/or qualification.

Typically, learning outcomes include:

- knowledge and understanding
- cognitive and intellectual skills
- skills and capabilities related to employability
- transferable or key skills
- professional competences, where relevant.

Certain professional courses may include specific professional competence requirements set by PSRBs.

A student's grade or classification is determined by their level of attainment within this basic structure and their own engagement with the curricula and learning opportunities on offer to enhance their ability to apply the skills, methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects. Students are assessed throughout their course according to assessment criteria set at course or module level in line with generic institutional and sector descriptors and reference points.

Upon awarding a degree, a graduate can be expected to have demonstrated and possess the skills and attributes attached to their respective classification, as described below.

Detailed descriptors

The following tables present a detailed articulation of how the broad graduate attributes acquired by students during their course might apply across different skills areas, competences and attributes.

Courses necessarily vary in what and how they assess, according to subject requirements. The different characteristics may not necessarily be assessed equally - providers are free to design courses with assessment weighted towards particular skills as they deem appropriate for meeting the required learning outcomes.

The criteria below present a holistic overview of the level a graduate would be expected to have reached during their degree. Not all descriptors will apply to all courses to the same extent: for example, numeracy and digital skills may not be as applicable to some arts courses as creativity skills, while the reverse might be true of some STEM subjects. If some criteria are not applicable to a given course, they may not need to be referenced.

Outcomes a graduate would be expected to demonstrate for each classification in different areas.

Table 4: Knowledge and understanding

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student's knowledge and understanding of the subject is inadequate, without the required breadth or depth, with deficiencies in key areas.	The student has demonstrated a depth of knowledge and understanding in key aspects of their field of study, sufficient to deal with terminology, facts and concepts.	The student has demonstrated a sound breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding, if sometimes balanced towards the descriptive rather than the critical or analytical.	The student has demonstrated sophisticated breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, showing a clear, critical insight.	The student has shown exceptional knowledge and understanding, significantly beyond the threshold expectation of a graduate at this level and beyond what has been taught.
The student has demonstrated inadequate understanding of subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, including their limitations and ambiguities.	The student has demonstrated an understanding of subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles.	The student has consistently demonstrated an understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles as well as more specialised areas.	The student has demonstrated a thorough understanding of subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles and a sound understanding of more specialised areas.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional understanding of subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles, and in-depth knowledge, if not mastery of a range of specialised areas.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has not produced sufficient evidence of background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study.	The student has conducted general background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques, with the ability to extract relevant points.	The student has conducted background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques accurately, and can critically appraise academic sources.	The student has conducted thorough background investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study using established techniques accurately, and possesses a well-developed ability to critically appraise a wide range of sources.	The student has conducted independent, extensive and appropriate investigation, analysis, research, enquiry and/or study well beyond the usual range, together with critical evaluation, to advance work and/or direct arguments.

Table 5: Cognitive skills

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has displayed an over-reliance on set sources. They have not demonstrated an adequate ability to select and evaluate reading and research.	The student has demonstrated the ability to select, evaluate and comment on reading, research and primary sources.	The student has selected, evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, sometimes beyond the set range.	The student has thoroughly selected, critically evaluated and commented on reading, research and primary sources, usually beyond the set range.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to select, consider, evaluate, comment on and synthesise a broad range of research, primary sources, views and information and integrate references.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student's arguments and explanations are weak and/or poorly constructed, and they are not able to critically evaluate the arguments of others or consider alternative views.	The student has shown the ability to devise and sustain an argument, with some consideration of alternative views, and can explain often complex matters and ideas.	The student has argued logically, with supporting evidence, and has demonstrated the ability to consider and evaluate a range of views and information. They have clearly and consistently explained complex matters and ideas.	The student has demonstrated the ability to make coherent, substantiated arguments, as well as the ability to consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a range of views and information. They have demonstrated a thorough, perceptive and thoughtful interpretation of complex matters and ideas	The student has made consistent, logical, coherently developed, and substantiated arguments, and demonstrated the ability to systematically consider, critically evaluate and synthesise a wide range of views and information. They have demonstrated sophisticated perception, critical insight and interpretation of complex matters and ideas.
The student has shown a limited ability to solve problems and/or make decisions.	The student has demonstrated an ability to solve problems, applying a range of methods to do so, and the ability to make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances.	The student has consistently solved complex problems, selecting and applying a range of appropriate methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances.	The student has demonstrated thorough problem-solving skills, selecting and justifying their use of a wide-range of methods, and can make decisions in complex and unpredictable circumstances with a degree of autonomy.	The student has demonstrated a wide range of extremely well-developed problem-solving skills, as well as a strong aptitude for decision making with a high degree of autonomy, in the most complex and unpredictable circumstances.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has shown little or no real creativity.	The student has produced some creative work.	The student has consistently demonstrated creativity.	The student has shown a high level of creativity and originality throughout their work.	The student has demonstrated exceptional creative flair and originality.

Table 6: Practical skills

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has not demonstrated sufficient evidence of discipline specific skills development or application.	The student has demonstrated evidence of developing and applying discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has consistently demonstrated the development and informed application of discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has demonstrated a capable and effective application of discipline-specific specialist skills.	The student has demonstrated an accomplished and innovative application of discipline-specific specialist skills.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has attempted practical tasks/processes but followed a limited, procedural or mechanistic formula, and they contain errors, with little or no independence.	The student has completed practical tasks and/or processes accurately and with a degree of independence.	The student has consistently completed practical tasks/processes mainly independently in an accurate, well-coordinated and proficient way.	The student has performed practical tasks and/or processes autonomously, with accuracy and coordination.	The student has autonomously completed practical tasks and/or processes with a high degree of accuracy, coordination and proficiency.
The student has demonstrated a lack of technical, creative and/or artistic skills in most, or key, areas.	The student has demonstrated technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has a thorough command of highly-developed relevant technical, creative and/or artistic skills.	The student has a full range of exceptional technical, creative and/or artistic skills.
The student has not presented their research findings clearly or effectively, and their gathering, processing and interpretation of data is unsatisfactory.	The student has presented their research findings, in several formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data effectively.	The student has consistently presented their research findings effectively and appropriately in many formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted data efficiently and effectively.	The student has presented thorough research findings perceptively and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively.	The student has presented research findings perceptively, convincingly and appropriately in a wide range of formats, and has gathered, processed and interpreted a wide range of complex data efficiently and effectively.

Table 7: Transferable skills

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student is not able to sufficiently express ideas and convey clear meaning verbally, electronically and/or in writing, uses inaccurate terminology, with many errors in spelling, vocabulary and syntax. They have been unable to demonstrate consistently basic numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing, with clear expression and style. They have also demonstrated numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can consistently and confidently communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions verbally, electronically and in writing. They show a clear, coherent, expressive style, with a range of vocabulary. They have consistently demonstrated strong numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions with a high degree of proficiency verbally, electronically and in writing. They have a clear, fluent and expressive style with appropriate vocabulary. They have a high standard of numeracy and digital literacy skills.	The student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to an accomplished level verbally, electronically and in writing. They have shown an accurate, fluent, sophisticated style. They possess exceptional numeracy and digital literacy skills.
The student has made infrequent contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has demonstrated a capability of making useful contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has consistently demonstrated the capability to make coherent and constructive contributions to group discussions and/or project work.	The student has demonstrated the capability to make strong, valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with an understanding of team and leadership roles.	The student has demonstrated the capability to make clear, authoritative and valuable contributions to group discussions and/or project work, with exceptional teamwork and leadership skills.

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has demonstrated little or no ability to manage their learning and/or work without supervision.	The student has shown an ability to manage their learning and work with minimal or no supervision.	The student has consistently shown an ability to systematically manage their learning, and work without supervision.	The student has shown a strong ability to systematically manage their learning, and work without supervision.	The student has shown an exceptional ability to manage their learning on their own initiative, and work without supervision.
The student has not demonstrated adequate initiative or personal responsibility.	The student has demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has consistently demonstrated initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has consistently demonstrated well-developed initiative and/or personal responsibility.	The student has demonstrated exceptional initiative and/or personal responsibility.
The student has shown little or no ability to reflect on their work.	The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect on their work.	The student has consistently demonstrated a well-developed ability to reflect on their work.	The student has demonstrated the ability to reflect critically on their work.	The student has demonstrated an exceptional ability to reflect critically and independently on their work.

Table 8: Professional competences

Not successful	3rd (pass or threshold)	2.2	2.1	1st
The student has not demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).	The student has demonstrated achievement of professional competence when assessed against the requirements of a PSRB.			
The student has failed to adhere to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry.	The student has adhered to the appropriate rules and/or conventions set by regulators or the industry.			