

ABSCQ

PART 3

LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT DEFINITIONS

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Introduction

Level of Attainment is a function of the quality and quantity of learning involved in the course of study leading to the award of a particular qualification. Quality and quantity of learning are measured in terms of three criteria:

- entry requirements;
- duration of study; and
- theoretical orientation.

Entry requirements refer to the minimum level of knowledge, understanding and skill required to undertake a course of study at that level of attainment. The minimum level of knowledge and understanding is usually measured by prior level of education obtained. (Age and/or experience may sometimes be accepted as an indication that an individual possesses sufficient knowledge to undertake a particular course of study). As the prerequisite level of knowledge for a course increases, so the level of attainment of the resultant qualification increases.

The **duration of study** of a course is the usual length of time needed to successfully acquire the requisite skills and knowledge. Courses of a longer duration are generally considered to be at a higher level of attainment. The equivalent full-time duration is considered in the case of part-time courses.

Theoretical orientation refers to the proportion of a course which is theoretical rather than factual or practical. Higher level qualifications are typically characterised by proportionally larger amounts of theoretical learning, whereas qualifications at lower levels of attainment devote larger proportions to practical learning.

The minimum entry requirements and duration of study are usually sufficient to determine the level of a course. When two courses have the same entry requirements and duration of study, the theoretical orientation of each is then considered.

The seven levels of attainment categories are:

- 1 Higher Degree
- 2 Postgraduate Diploma
- 3 Bachelor Degree
- 4 Undergraduate Diploma
- 5 Associate Diploma
- 6 Skilled Vocational Qualifications
- 7 Basic Vocational Qualifications

The classification structure is comparable with that of the Register of Australian Tertiary Education (RATE). RATE includes separate categories for Advanced Certificate and Graduate Certificate, both of which are not large enough to be statistically feasible in the ABSCQ. RATE has a single category for Certificate whereas the ABSCQ has two categories for certificate qualifications – Skilled Vocational Qualifications (includes all trade certificates) and Basic Vocational Qualifications.

Level 1 Higher Degree

Higher Degree courses involve in-depth study in a particular field, and build on the knowledge and skills gained in previous study in the same area. There is usually emphasis on original research. This level includes doctorates and master degrees, either by research or course work.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for a doctorate course is usually the completion of a master degree or a first class honours degree. The minimum entry requirement for a master degree course is usually the completion of an honours degree.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for a higher degree course is a minimum of two to four years of study for a doctorate, and two years of full-time study or equivalent for a master degree.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of a higher degree course is an in-depth theoretical study of the nature and underlying principles of a specific area of interest; that is, they involve a greater proportion of theoretical learning than factual or practical learning. A master degree course usually focuses on researching a topic in the chosen field, whilst a doctorate course involves an original research project resulting in a significant contribution to the knowledge or understanding in the designated field.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Doctor of Philosophy in Astronomy
- Doctor of Education in Curriculum (EdD)
- Master of Counselling
- Master of Applied Science in Environmental Toxicology
- Master of Engineering Science in Computer Engineering
- Master of Arts in Sociology
- Doctor of Veterinary Studies
- Master of Social Work
- Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (FRACP)

Note:

Many of the post-basic medical specialities are included in this level, as the duration of study and the theoretical orientation are commensurate with those required for higher degree qualifications.

Level 2 Postgraduate Diploma

Postgraduate Diploma courses usually build on undergraduate studies, and are designed to broaden or develop professional knowledge and skills in a related or new area of study. This level also includes Graduate Certificates.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for a postgraduate diploma course is usually the successful completion of a bachelor degree or an undergraduate diploma.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for a postgraduate diploma course ranges from six months (in the case of Graduate Certificates) to one year full-time study or equivalent.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of a postgraduate diploma course is an understanding and critical examination of the principles, theories, models and methods of a specific field of study, and the ability to apply them to particular tasks or problems.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Graduate Diploma in Migrant Studies
- Postgraduate Diploma in Chemistry
- Diploma in Clinical Pathology
- Graduate Diploma in Forest Science
- Graduate Diploma of Arts in Children's Literature
- Graduate Diploma of Business in Hospitality
- Diploma of Education in Special Education
- Graduate Diploma in Teacher Librarianship
- Graduate Certificate in Business

Inclusions:

Graduate Certificates are included in this level as they have the same entry requirements and broadly the same theoretical orientation as postgraduate diplomas.

Level 3 Bachelor Degree

Bachelor Degree courses provide individuals with a systematic and coherent introduction to a broad body of knowledge, emphasising the underlying principles and concepts.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for a bachelor degree course is the satisfactory completion of Year 12 or its equivalent.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for a bachelor degree course ranges from three to six years of full-time study or its equivalent.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of a bachelor degree course is a broad theoretical understanding of the underlying principles and concepts relating to either a specific, or a general field of knowledge. A greater proportion of the course is concerned with the underlying theories and facts, than with the development of practical skills.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Bachelor of Engineering in Ceramic Engineering
- Bachelor of Architecture
- Bachelor of Arts in English (Hons)
- Bachelor of Economics
- Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting
- Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Teaching
- Bachelor of Health Science in Nursing
- Bachelor of Veterinary Science
- Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics (Hons)
- Bachelor of Law
- Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery

Inclusions:

Honours degrees are included in this level.

Level 4 Undergraduate Diploma

Undergraduate Diploma courses provide individuals with the detailed knowledge and skill base necessary for practice in a professional or para-professional occupation.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for an undergraduate diploma course is usually the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for an undergraduate diploma course is three years of full-time study or its equivalent.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of undergraduate diploma courses is usually an understanding of specific theories and facts, and the acquisition of related practical skills and techniques.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Certificate in Psychiatric Nursing
- Diploma of Applied Science in Air Traffic Service
- Diploma of Teaching in Early Childhood Education
- Diploma of Applied Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics
- Diploma of Applied Science in Nursing
- Diploma of Applied Arts in Graphic Design
- Diploma of Social Science in Childcare Services
- Diploma of Teaching (Primary)

Note:

Certain other qualifications besides undergraduate diplomas are classified to this level on the basis that their entry requirements, duration of study, and theoretical orientation are regarded as being equivalent to those of undergraduate diplomas (eg. Certificate in Psychiatric Nursing).

Level 5 Associate Diploma

Associate Diploma courses provide individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide support to professionals, and for positions in advanced trade, technical or para-professional occupations.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for an associate diploma course is usually completion of Year 12, or the completion of Year 10 and a pre-requisite certificate course.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for an associate diploma course ranges from one to two years of full-time study or its equivalent.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of an associate diploma course is the development of advanced practical skills in a specific field, with a general understanding of the underlying theories and methods related to that field. These courses may also include the development of supervisory and administrative skills.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Associate Diploma of Business Administration
- Advanced Certificate in Panelbeating
- Associate Diploma in Labour Studies
- Associate Diploma of Engineering in Civil Engineering
- Associate Diploma of Transport Administration
- Certificate of Technology in Architectural Drafting
- Associate Diploma of Applied Science in Laboratory Science
- Advanced Certificate in Law Enforcement Studies
- Technician Certificate in Foundry Practice

Inclusions:

Advanced Certificates, Technician Certificates and Certificates of Technology are included in this level as they have broadly the same theoretical orientation as associate diplomas.

Level 6 Skilled Vocational Qualifications

Skilled Vocational Qualifications courses provide individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to work in a specific vocation, recognised trade or craft, that requires a high degree of skill, usually in a range of related activities.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for a skilled vocational qualification course is usually the completion of Year 10 or its equivalent. In addition, some courses may require the student to be concurrently employed in that specific field.

Duration of Study

The duration of study for a skilled vocational qualification course is two to four years, and typically incorporates some on-the-job training.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus of a skilled vocational qualification course is the development of a high degree of practical skill together with the theoretical and factual knowledge required to work in a specific vocation, trade or craft.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Trade Certificate in Vehicle Building
- Certificate in Landscape Design
- Trade Certificate in Jewellery
- Trade Certificate in Carpentry
- Apprenticeship in Optical Mechanics
- Trade Certificate in Metal Fabrication
- Apprenticeship in Electrical Fitting

Note:

All Trade Certificates are classified to this level. Certain other qualifications besides trade certificates are also classified to this level on the basis that their entry requirements, duration of study, and theoretical orientation are assessed as being equivalent to those of trade certificates.

Level 7 Basic Vocational Qualifications

Basic Vocational Qualifications courses provide individuals with the practical skills and background knowledge necessary for employment at the operative level in many different fields. They usually emphasise a single activity which can be performed on completion of the course.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for a basic vocational qualification course is often Year 10. Many courses, however, have no formal entry requirements.

Duration of Study

The duration of study of basic vocational qualification course is usually short, typically ranging from about 200 hours to one year of full-time study or equivalent.

Theoretical Orientation

The focus for a basic vocational qualification course is the development of a limited range of practical skills and the associated knowledge needed to perform a limited range of skilled tasks.

Examples of qualifications include:

- Pre-apprenticeship in Plumbing
- Certificate in Cake Decorating
- Certificate in Sculpture
- Certificate in Earth Moving Plant Operation
- Certificate in Photography
- Traineeship Certificate in Advertising
- Certificate in Shorthand and Keyboarding
- Pre-vocational Certificate in Automotive Mechanics
- Certificate of Applied Science in Textile Technology

Inclusions:

Pre-apprenticeship Certificates, Pre-vocational Certificates and Certificates of Proficiency (Traineeship Certificates) are included in this level as they have broadly the same entry requirements, duration of study and theoretical orientation.