

AQF specification for the Masters Degree

This *Specification* informs the design and accreditation of Masters Degree qualifications.

The principal users of the *AQF Qualification Type Specifications* are the accrediting authorities in each education and training sector which are responsible for the accreditation of AQF qualifications and the developers of AQF qualifications in each education and training sector.

The other users of the *Specifications* are the authorised issuing organisations, industry and professional bodies, licensing and regulatory bodies, students, graduates and employers.

There are three main forms of Masters Degrees within the Masters Degree qualification type: the Masters Degree (Research), the Masters Degree (Coursework) and the Masters Degree (Extended).

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Research) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning.

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Coursework) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and as a pathway for further learning.

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Extended) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice and as a pathway for further learning.

Masters Degree qualifications are located at level 9 of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Masters Degree qualifications must be designed and accredited to enable graduates to demonstrate the learning outcomes specified in the level 9 criteria and either the Masters Degree (Research) descriptor, the Masters Degree (Coursework) descriptor or the Masters Degree (Extended) descriptor.

AQF level 9 criteria

Summary	Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and/or further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice
Skills	Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyse critically, reflect on and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories• research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice• interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner

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Masters Degree qualification type descriptors			
	Masters Degree (Research)	Masters Degree (Coursework)	Masters Degree (Extended)
Summary	The Masters Degree (Research) qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning	The Masters Degree (Coursework) qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and as a pathway for further learning	The Masters Degree (Extended) qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice and as a pathway for further learning
Knowledge	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in one or more disciplines advanced knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a discipline and/or area of professional practice knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work and/or learning 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Extended) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a body of knowledge that includes the extended understanding of recent developments in a discipline and its professional practice knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the discipline and its professional practice
Skills	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to reflect critically on theory and its application cognitive, technical and creative skills to investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level cognitive and technical skills to design, use and evaluate research and research methods communication and technical skills to present a coherent and sustained argument and to disseminate research results to specialist and non-specialist audiences technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse, theorise and disseminate research that makes a contribution to knowledge 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to reflect critically on theory and professional practice or scholarship cognitive, technical and creative skills to investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level communication and technical research skills to justify and interpret theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Extended) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to reflect critically on theory and professional practice cognitive, technical and creative skills to investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level communication and technical research skills to justify and interpret theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice
Application of knowledge and skills	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with creativity and initiative to new situations and/or for further learning with high level personal autonomy and accountability to plan and execute a substantial piece of research 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with creativity and initiative to new situations in professional practice and/or for further learning with high level personal autonomy and accountability to plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Extended) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with creativity and initiative to new situations in professional practice and/or for further learning with high level personal autonomy and accountability to plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or professionally focused project
Volume of learning	The volume of learning of a Masters Degree (Research) is typically 1 – 2 years; in the same discipline 1.5 years following a level 7 qualification or 1 year following a level 8 qualification; in a different discipline 2 years following a level 7 qualification or 1.5 years following a level 8 qualification	The volume of learning of a Masters Degree (Coursework) is typically 1 – 2 years; in the same discipline 1.5 years following a level 7 qualification or 1 year following a level 8 qualification; in a different discipline 2 years following a level 7 qualification or 1.5 years following a level 8 qualification	The volume of learning of a Masters Degree (Extended) is typically 3 – 4 years following completion of a minimum of a 3 year level 7 qualification

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Qualification nomenclature

The title used for Masters Degree (Research, Coursework or Extended) qualifications must be consistent with the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

The title 'Master of ...' is the title used for the Masters Degree. Exceptions may be permitted in accordance with the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

For exceptions:

- The qualification title and a statement that the qualification is an 'AQF level 9 Masters Degree' will appear on relevant certification documents, on any national, state/territory or institutional registers of qualifications, and in institutional information and promotional materials.
- The qualification may not be referred to as a Doctoral Degree in any written, oral or electronic information.

Pathways

Each qualification accredited as a Masters Degree will include documented pathways consistent with the *AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy*.

Issuing organisations offering a Masters Degree qualification must meet the requirements of the *AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy*.

Responsibility for accreditation and development

Accrediting authorities and those developing qualifications for accreditation must adhere to the AQF specification for this qualification type and any government accreditation standards for higher education when accrediting a Masters Degree qualification.

Accrediting authorities are responsible for monitoring the quality of issuing organisations against any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements.

When accrediting AQF Masters Degree qualifications accrediting authorities must ensure that:

- Graduates of a Masters Degree qualification will achieve learning outcomes at level 9.
- All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills) of the Masters Degree qualification type (either Research, Coursework or Extended) are evident in each qualification accredited as this type. Some may have more emphasis than others in different Masters Degree qualifications depending on their purpose.
- The Masters Degree (Research) is designed so that graduates will have undertaken supervised study and research of which two thirds will be devoted to research, research training and independent study.
- The Masters Degree (Coursework) is designed so that graduates will have undertaken a program of structured learning with some independent research, and project work or practice-related learning. If this qualification is to prepare graduates for a profession a significant component of structured learning will be developed in collaboration with a relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.
- The Masters Degree (Extended) is designed so that graduates will have undertaken a program of structured learning with some independent research and a significant proportion of practice-related learning. As this qualification is designed to prepare graduates to engage in a profession, the practice-related learning must be developed in collaboration with a relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

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- Generic learning outcomes are explicitly identified in the qualification and align with the level of the qualification type, the purpose of the qualification and the discipline. Generic learning outcomes fall into four broad categories: fundamental skills; people skills; thinking skills; and personal skills. In the higher education sector they are generally known as graduate attributes and are defined by each higher education provider.
- The relationship between the learning outcomes in the level 9 criteria, the qualification type descriptor, and the discipline is clear.
- The design of the components of the qualification will provide coherent learning outcomes for the level and qualification type and will enable graduates to demonstrate them.
- The volume of learning is sufficient for graduates to achieve the learning outcomes for a qualification of this level and type.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register in a form consistent with the *AQF Qualifications Register Policy*.

Authority to issue the qualification

A Masters Degree qualification may only be issued by an organisation that is authorised by an accrediting authority to do so, and meets any government standards for the sector.

Assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the issuing organisation. The issuing organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the learning outcomes and that the graduate has satisfactorily completed any requirements for the awarding of the qualification.

Issuing organisations must issue qualifications consistent with the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

Issuing organisations will maintain a register of the AQF qualifications they have issued consistent with the *AQF Qualifications Register Policy*.



**Australian Qualifications
Framework Council**

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