

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK



Back to Level Descriptors.....

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2. Who?
3. Where?
4. Why?
5. How?
6. When?
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8. Q & A



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Let's start with.....

- **What** are levels?
 - an indicator of relative demand made on the learner, the complexity and/or depth of achievement, and the learner's autonomy in demonstrating that achievement
- **What** are level descriptors
 - statement describing learning achievement at a specific level on the NQF
 - provide a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each of these ten levels
- **Who** uses level descriptors?
 - Learners
 - Providers
 - Curriculum designers
 - Employers, etc
- **Where** are level descriptors used?
 - An **inclusive** framework – the level descriptors are designed to enable their use across a wide range of learning contexts
 - The descriptors have been written to cover the full range of learning achievement:
 - i.e. all forms of learning - formal, non-formal and informal

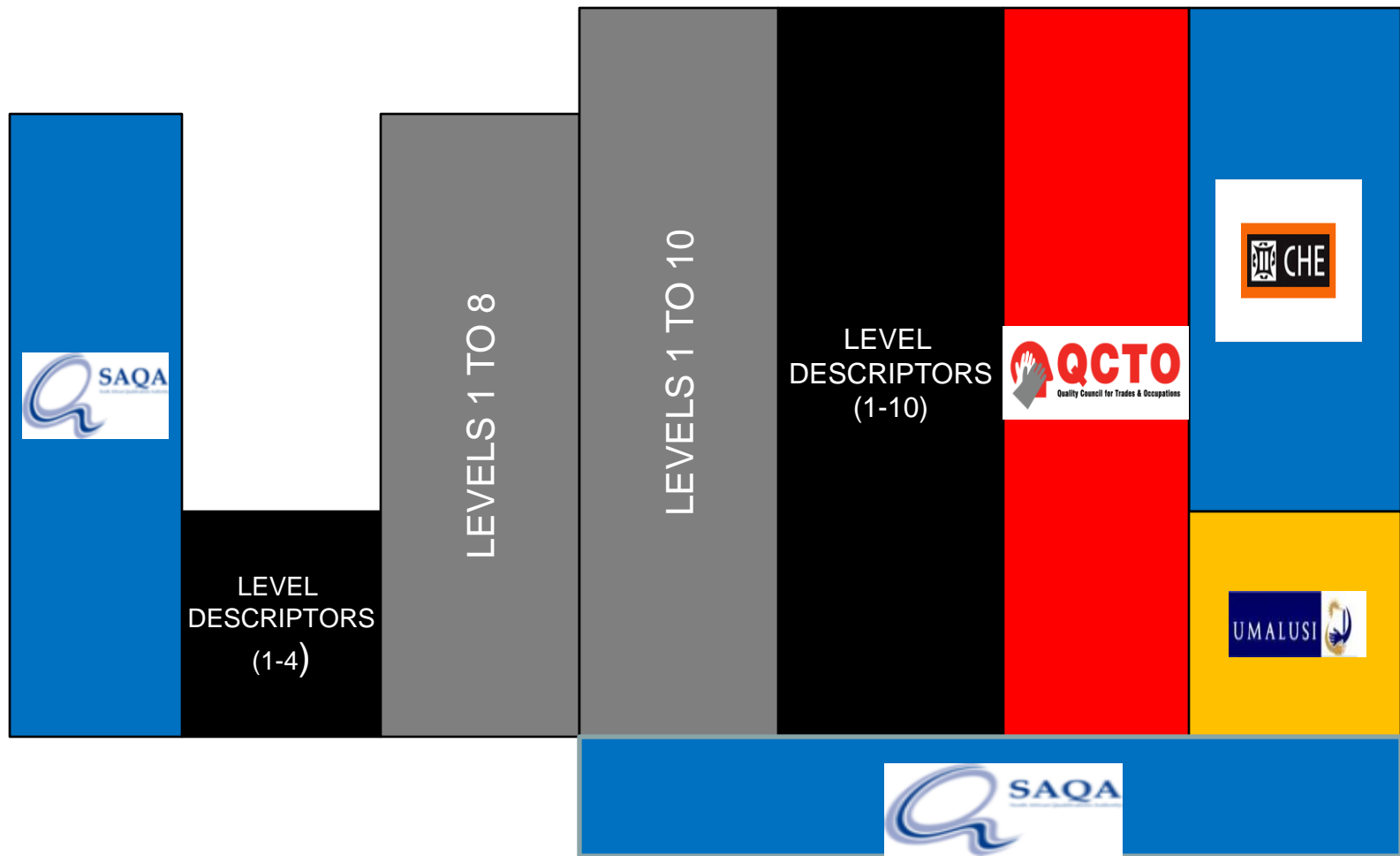
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Why? (legislation & policy)

**SAQA Act
of 1995**

**NQF Act
of 2008**



Why?

- Coherence in learning achievement
- Facilitate evaluation for comparability
- Advance objectives of the NQF
 - Single integrated national framework for learning achievement
 - Facilitate access, mobility & progression
 - Enhance quality
 - Accelerate redress
 - Personal & socio-economic development
- General, shared understanding of learning & achievement



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Philosophy

- Applied competence
 - ✓ Foundational competence (academic/intellectual skills)
 - ✓ Practical competence (operational context)
 - ✓ Reflexive competence (learner autonomy)
- Categories
 - ✓ Scope of knowledge
 - ✓ Knowledge literacy
 - ✓ Method and procedure
 - ✓ Problem solving
 - ✓ Ethics & professional practice
 - ✓ Accessing, processing and managing information
 - ✓ Producing and communicating information
 - ✓ Context and systems
 - ✓ Management of learning
 - ✓ Accountability

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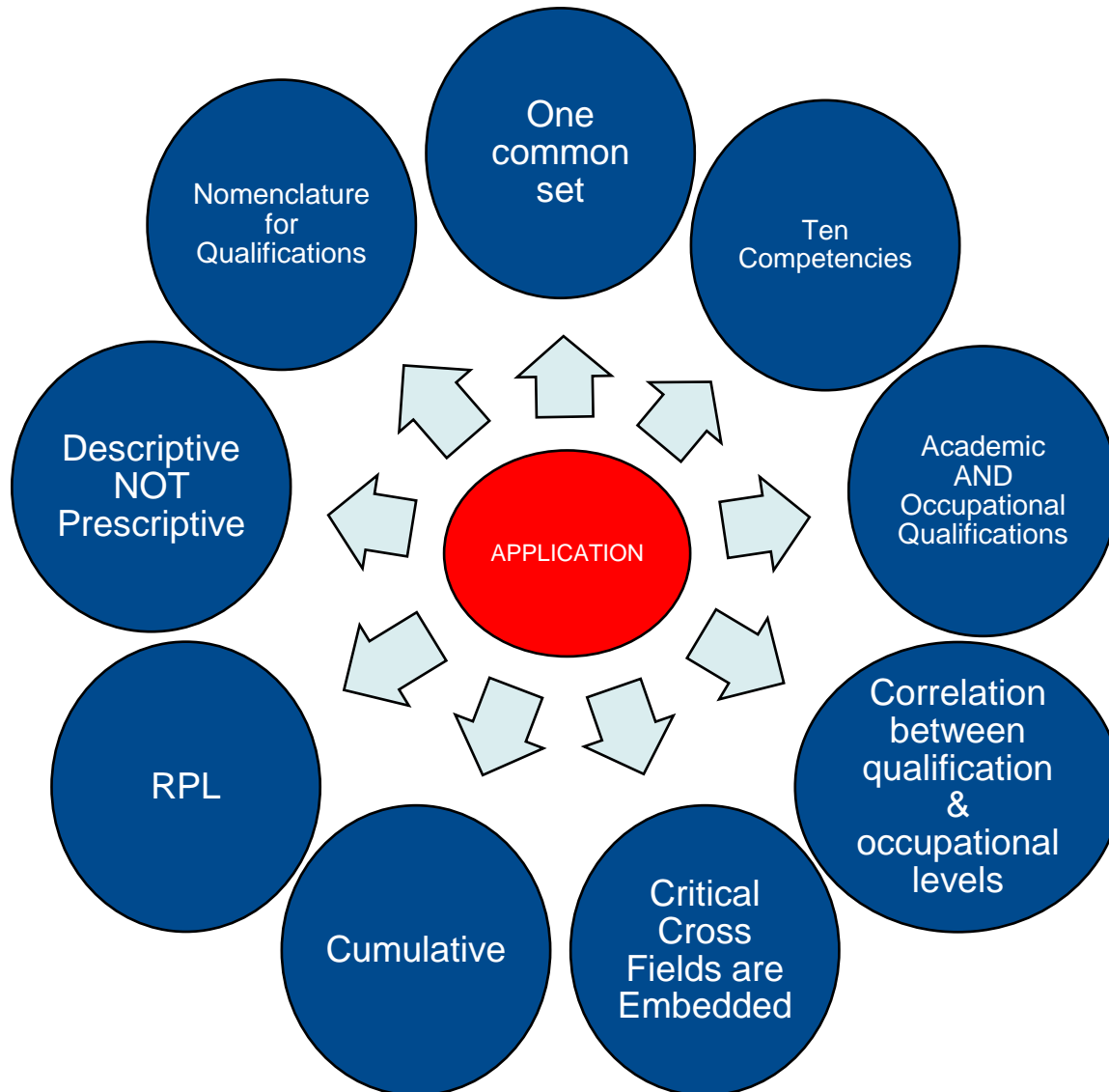
Who?

- Guideline to practitioners who design and deliver qualifications or who need to understand qualifications' use in the workplace or labour market.
- Professional expertise is required to apply the level descriptors to own subject area or context.
- Use knowledge and understanding of relevant leveling tools such as sector-specific or subject-specific descriptors.



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Principles



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How?



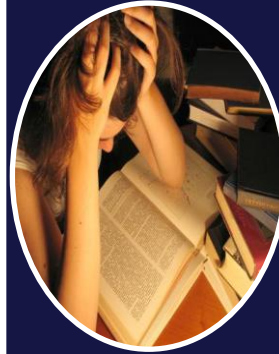
Broad contexts
and
environment



Scaffold to
develop
specific
descriptors



Guide and
starting point



Competencies
indicated



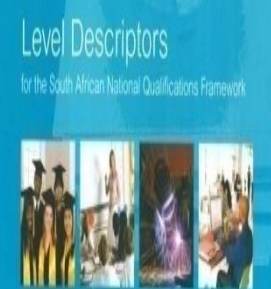
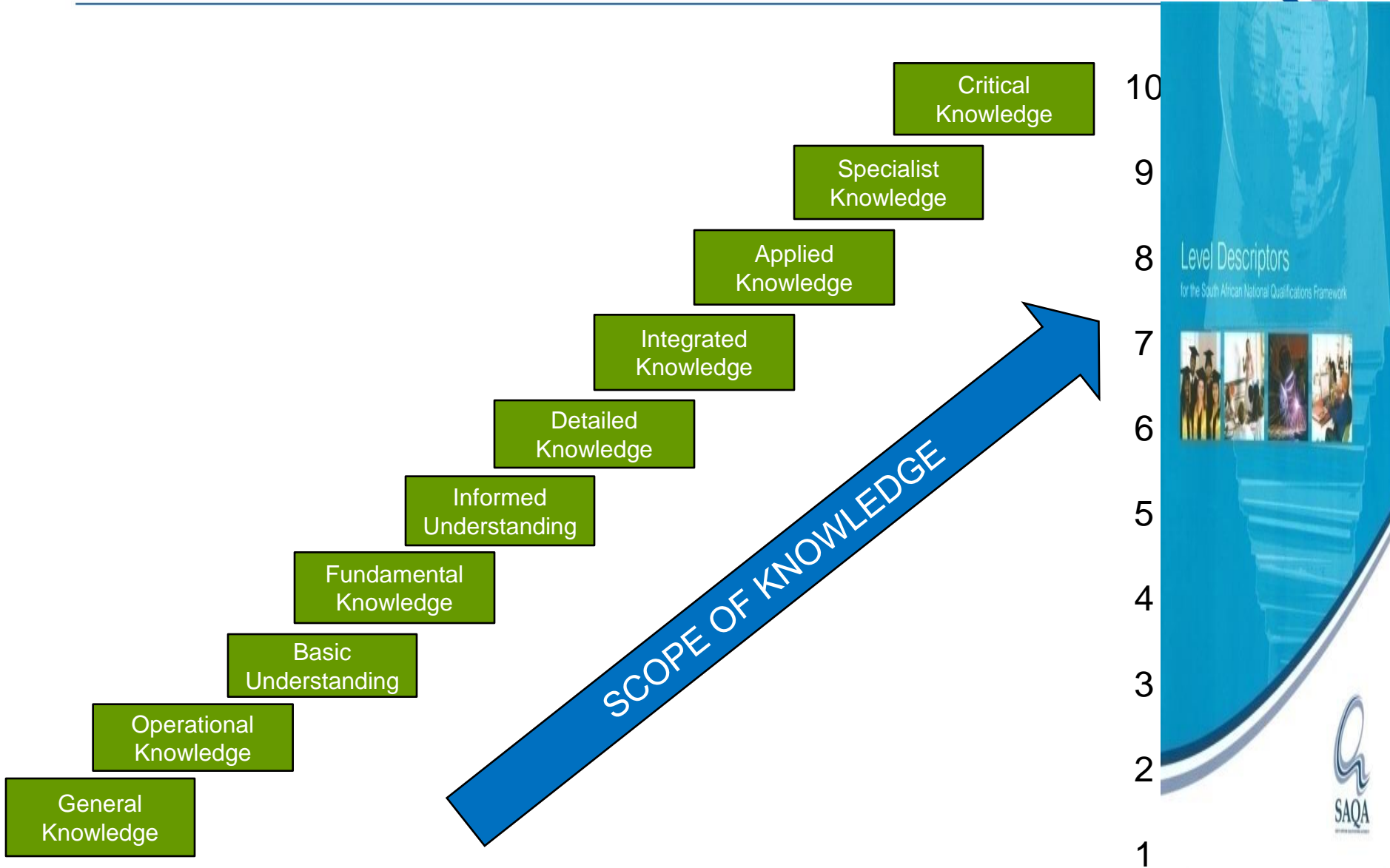
Braille & sign
language
accommodated



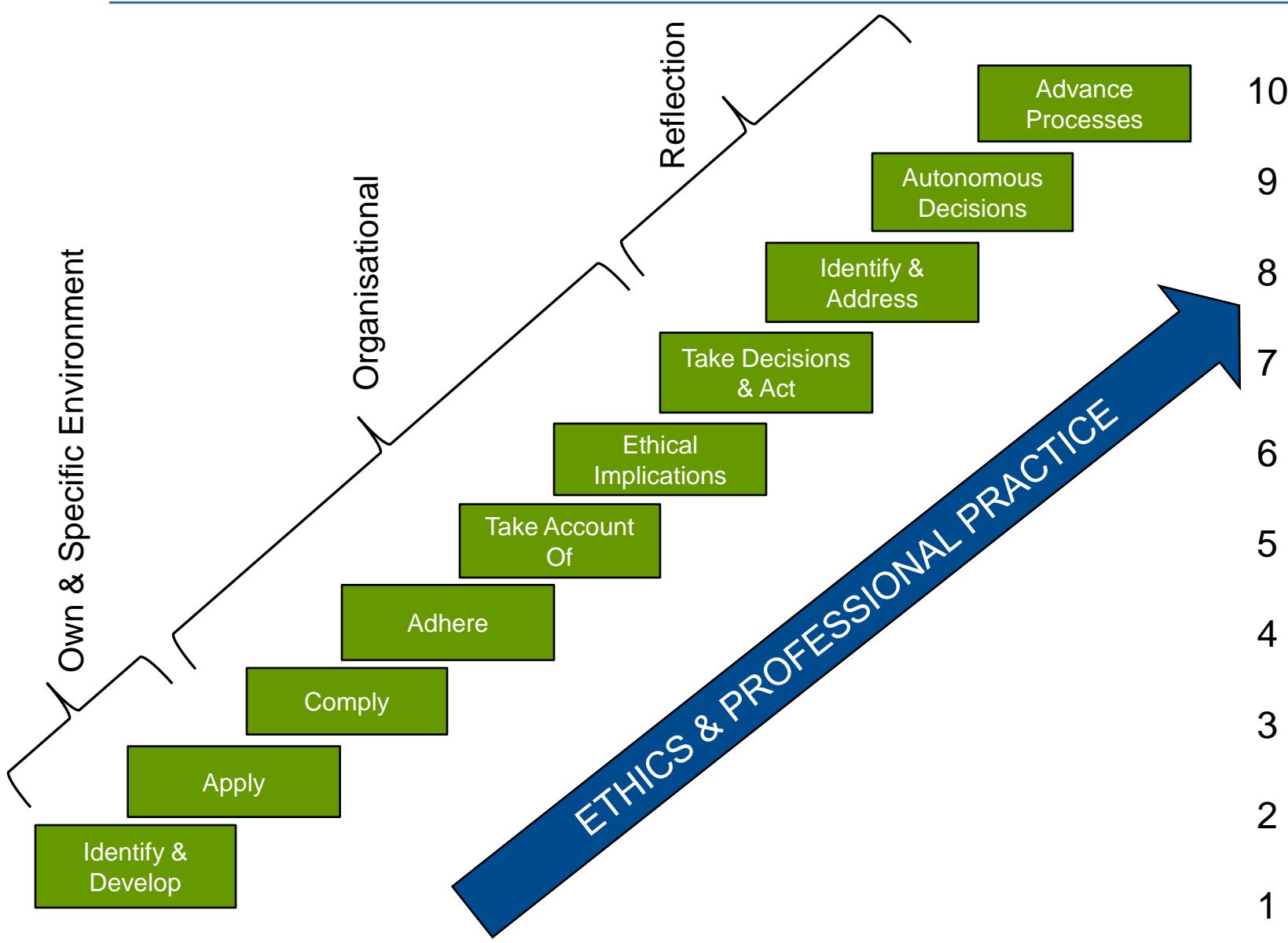
NOT
assessment
criteria & NOT
years of study



How?



How?



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When to Use Level Descriptors

- when designing new programmes of study
- when writing learning outcomes
- when writing assessment criteria
- when assessing prior learning
- when incorporating non-traditional learning (e.g. work-based learning) into award-bearing courses
- when modules, or short courses, need to be related to
- for accreditation purposes
- when learning at different levels needs to be compared



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How to use the Level Descriptors

- Apply the principle of “best fit”



- Establish ‘the centre of gravity’ of the qualification



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Clarifying some myths



“Equivalence?”

- Is the NCV at NQF level 4 the same as the NSC, also at NQF level 4?
- The NQF does not promote or discriminate (against) any type of qualification
- The NQF acts as a neutral reference point for all different sorts of qualifications
- An important underlying principle of the NQF is the promotion of *parity of esteem* between academic, vocational and higher education routes or pathways as well as between basic and post-school education and training

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“Higher Levels = More Specialisation”

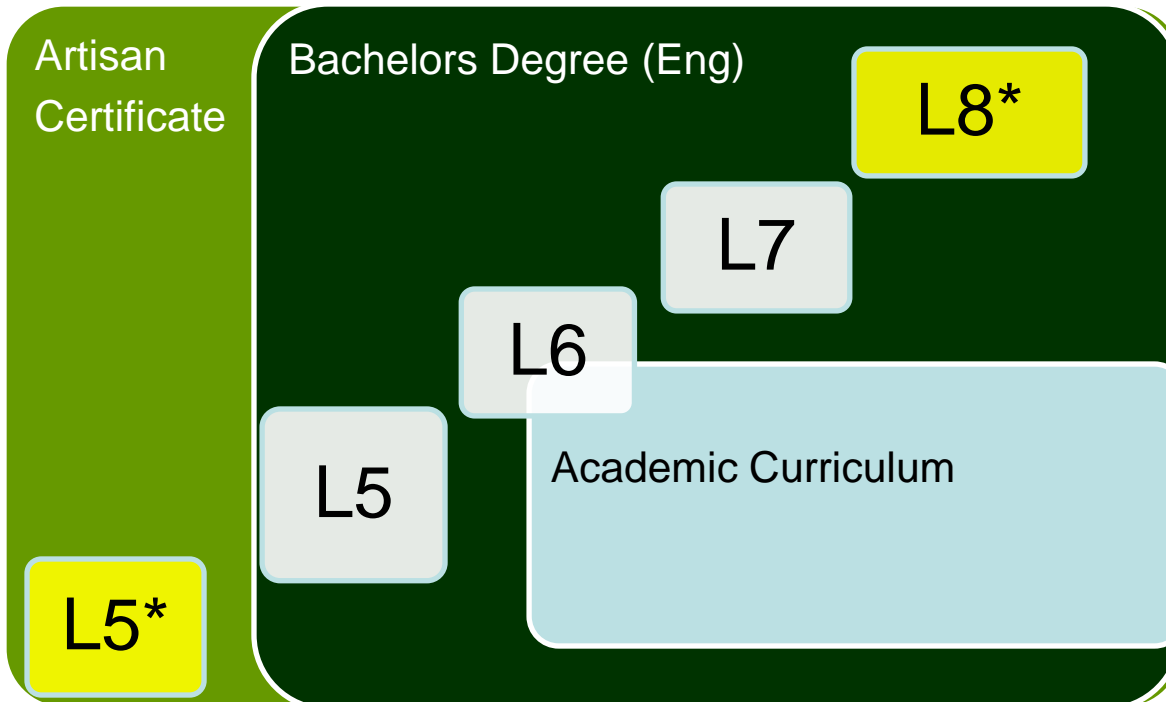
- The higher you go on the NQF, the more specialised you become.....or is it?
- The descriptors reflect its utility for both specialisations and generalisations
- Reaching a higher level does not necessarily imply that the required skills and knowledge will be more specialised, although this might be the case in many academic, research and professional contexts
- Moving from a lower to a higher level, in some study or work contexts, can also mean becoming more of a generalist

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“Sequencing”

- Indicating NQF levels for qualifications does not mean that qualifications necessarily have to be acquired in the same sequence as the NQF levels
- EXAMPLE

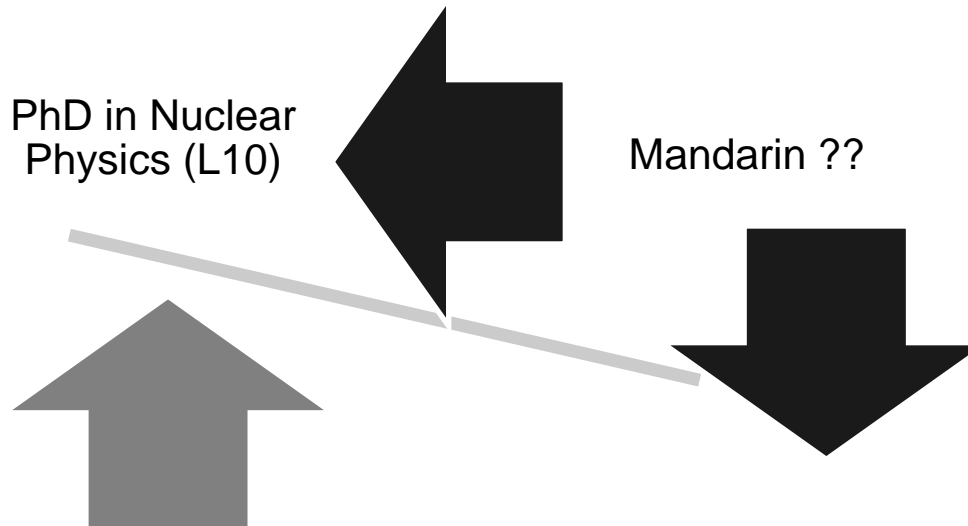


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“Promoting a culture ‘moving up’”

- Over their lifetime, learners will primarily move from a lower to a higher level
- It is also possible to gain two different qualifications at the same level or to move from a higher to a lower level of qualification, if new learning is taken on and new skills are acquired
- E.G. The PhD moving to China



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In the end.....

Level descriptors:

1. Are helpful guides rather than dictates
2. Are generic and not programme-specific
3. Do not cover all possible learning relevant in a programme of study
4. Work better when viewed in the context of progression - look at the same descriptors for the previous and the next level
5. Can be understood in terms of the relationship between descriptors at the same level
6. Provide an appropriate vocabulary to describe learning



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THANK YOU!

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