

BACHELOR

International Business Management

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International Business and Trade

REPORT EDUCATIONAL MIRROR

October | 2022



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MORE

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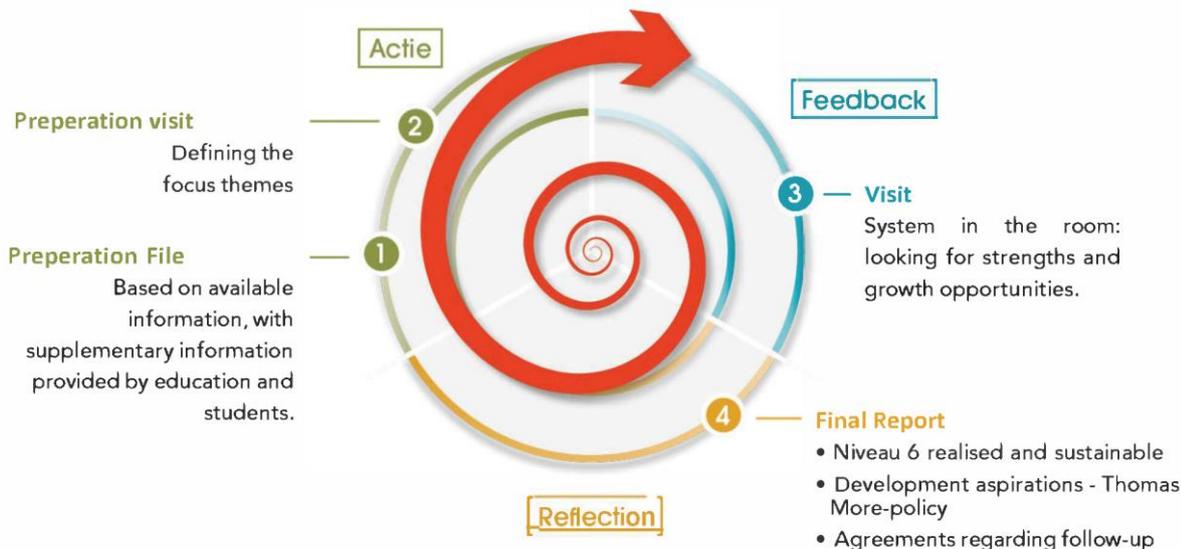
1. Structure of the educational mirror

Reading guide

The report starts, after a schematic representation of the educational mirror process (in section 1), with the general conclusions of the panel (section 2).

The discussion of each theme (section 3) helps to frame and substantiate these conclusions. Partly based on the results of the educational mirror, the programme has formulated its ambitions (point 4).

The annexes provide additional information on the composition of the panel, the programme of the visit and the way in which we assessed level 6 of the Flemish qualifications structure.



Actie	Feedback	Reflectie
<p>Preparation file</p> <p>Based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reader's guide - Documents Policy Compass - Further explanation: International Internship and Bachelor Thesis/Project plus additional information - Assessment products, bachelor level - Dashboard Thomas More - ECTS files <p>Preparation visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Themes: Internationalisation; Collaboration with the professional field; Soft skills and professional attitude. - Level 6 	<p>Visit</p> <p>Date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25/10/2022 <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frank Vonk - Gerard Sijben - Ivo Fremau - Inge Jochems - Quinten Verdonck 	<p>Final report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report: 21/11/2022 - Discussion: 21/12/2022

2. General conclusions of the panel

Upon completion of the visit, the panel has concluded that the programme achieves the final level (6) with the required professional orientation.

During the visit, the panel was impressed amongst others by:

- Warm driven teachers who are approachable to students.
- Lecturers are experts in their fields and are interculturally aware.
- It is clear from the conversations that alumni are proud of the education they followed.
- During the conversations, the panel experienced the professional field as positively critical. The panel sees opportunities to further feed and perpetuate this.
- Teachers are able pinpoint where the programme could do better and what opportunities for improvement remain. In addition, the panel noticed that lecturers are actively looking for solutions.
- Lecturers dare to discuss educational and didactic topics with each other in an open atmosphere. The panel noticed that they listen to each other's arguments, without judging them directly.

"We have a very unique, diverse and international student body. Which is a massive strength for our study programme which we have to nurture." (Lecturer)

An outline of the main conclusions of the conversations is provided.

Across the various conversations, the panel sees the opportunity for the programme to engage in further formalisation and development of a policy around the various themes discussed. The panel has noticed that several good ideas emerged during the conversations and sees opportunities for the programme to further formalise and build in these ideas into a clearly defined strategy.

Conversation partners agree that the programme already has a strong international DNA. The presence of various international actors (lecturers, students, partners from the workfield) contributes strongly to this. The panel appreciates the international character of the programme.

Lecturers see opportunities for the programme to prioritise cooperation with the professional field over the next two years. Setting up an advisory committee is a first step. In addition, the panel sees the opportunity to think about the role of the professional field within the curriculum. After all, alumni and students see opportunities to get a taste of the field from phase 1 onwards. Networking and building a professional network play an important role in this, according to alumni and students.

The panel appreciates that the programme wants to focus strongly on soft skills and professional attitude. The panel sees opportunities for the programme to clearly define which soft skills it wants to focus on in its curriculum. Here too, alumni see an important role for the professional field. After all, monitoring the balance between soft skills and hard skills is extremely important.

3. Discussion of each theme

3.1 Level 6 and professional orientation

The panel concludes that the programme realises level 6 with the right professional orientation. This conclusion is supported by the following observations:

- Industry partners indicate that graduates are immediately employable.
- Alumni and students confirm that they are ready to start.
- The assignments performed within the final internship are representative of the tasks within the professional field.
- The overview list and assessment lists show the relevant topics that new graduates face in the professional field.

"My experience is that the students learn really fast [...]. In a very short period of time, a student I supervised was able to produce content and be valuable. [...] There is nothing for me to say then apart from that my experience was excellent." (professional field)

The panel has seen a number of **positives points** in terms of the sustainability of the final level. The panel considers the triangulation used by the programme to arrive at an assessment in the Bachelor Thesis a good practice. However, the panel recommends the programme to further formalise this practice.

The panel notes during the conversation that the programme is actively seeking ways in which students' talents can find their place in the Bachelor Thesis. The panel notes that harnessing students' talents is inherent in the programme's DNA.

Furthermore, it is clear from the conversations that the programme and, in particular, the lecturers the panel has spoken to, show that they are open to curriculum optimisations. The panel appreciates the openness and enthusiasm to keep looking critically at its own programme. The panel also recognises that the programme has developed a good basis for the programme in only five years of its existence. As a result, the panel calls for the continuation of this course of action in order to make the programme more sustainable as well. The panel believes -the programme has all the strengths to achieve this. After all, the conversations show that the team is continuously working on the development of the study programme. Nevertheless, the panel would like to point out that a step-by-step approach and establishing focus in the further development of the programme is important.

In order to really realise the **sustainable character** of the assessment of the final level, the panel formulates the following recommendations for the study programme.

The programme indicates in its learning outcomes matrix that all Domain-Specific Learning Outcomes (DLR's) are assessed in the course units Bachelor Thesis and International Internship. The panel however cannot see from the documents and products provided regarding the course unit Bachelor Thesis how the DLR's are translated and given a clear place in the assessment of the Bachelor Thesis. Furthermore, lecturers indicate that the relationship between the DLR's and the evaluation of the thesis can be made clearer.

"The relation between DLR's and the evaluation of thesis should be improved." (lecturer)

The panel asks the programme to carefully map out which DLR's are assessed in which course units at level 6. Furthermore the panel considers it important that when a DLR is assessed several times at the final level, it's important to ensure that the learning objectives and outcomes are distinctive. The panel advises the programme to align the final assessment with the final assessment criteria: validity, transparency, reliability, efficiency and instructiveness.

In addition, the panel notes that the translation of the DLR's into criteria, used in the course units the programme assures the final level with, are insufficiently clear and insightful. The panel asks the programme to define more concretely the link between the DLR's and the assessment criteria. Furthermore, the conversations show that it is insufficiently clear to students and mentors what the assessment criteria are

within the Bachelor Thesis and the International Internship. It is also insufficiently clear to students and mentors which learning outcomes must be acquired by students within these course units. The panel advises the programme to develop a formal system that can guarantee that the assessment criteria and learning outcomes are clear to all actors. The panel considers it very important to build in **calibration** between the different assessors who have to assess. After all, the panel is convinced that, through this formalisation, own interpretation of the assessment criteria as well as the use of own learning outcomes by different assessors can be avoided.

"The rubric is not clearly asking for DLRs. We admit that there is only a vague reference" (lecturer)

The panel also wants to indicate that it is important that the score that is given to students, is established in consultation between student, teacher and mentor and that the programme ultimately determines the final score given. The panel sees the triangulation and calibration between the different actors in establishing a particular score as an important opportunity to be seized.

"There are different parties to evaluate students: company mentors, a jury of members of the field, teachers, ... But there is not much concertation between the graders. People that evaluate do it from a different angle. " (lecturer)

During the conversations, students indicated that it is not clear to them what the expectations are regarding the International Internship and that finding an internship as such is considered difficult. The panel appreciates the openness of the students and encourages the programme to focus on professional and personal development of students from phase 1 so that students know which internships are suitable, learn about the access routes to suitable internships and can reflect on the students' process in a timely manner.

"Internships for foreign students are hard to find. Thomas More should help them more. (alumni)

Based on the above recommendations, the panel sees opportunities for the programme to professionalise itself educationally and recommends that the programme be adequately supported in this.

3.2 Focus theme: Internationalisation

The programme dreams of delivering students who are immediately employable in any cultural or regional context. Together with the panel, the programme will explore how it can realise this dream and what further steps can be taken to achieve it.

It is clear from the conversations that the international DNA is clearly present within the programme. The panel notes that the programme is already highly developed in terms of both aspects of internationalisation: international and intercultural. The international actors (lecturers, students and professional field) contribute strongly to this. The panel appreciates the international DNA inherently contained in the programme.

The panel does encourage the programme to formalise this international DNA even more strongly and to establish a clear strategy regarding internationalisation within the programme. Several ideas emerge from the discussion that could shape this strategy. The panel notes that the ingredients to realise this strategy are already strongly present within the programme.

"Compose small groups with different gender, religion, colour... and give introverted people a chance to speak. Don't let them self-segregate and push a little." (lecturer)

There are clear ideas among lecturers about how the curriculum can prepare students to be immediately employable in any cultural or regional context. Amongst others they want to have an even more inclusive curriculum as a key ingredient in becoming more future proof. In line with this, the panel noticed that lecturers have a clear idea about internationalisation and the further development of internationalisation within the programme. Alumni present also have various ideas that can contribute to the further development of internationalisation. As an example they indicated that informal learning helped them a lot and that it is a powerful tool which could be more integrated and stimulated in the curriculum. The panel encourages the study programme to consult and sufficiently involve the various stakeholders of the programme when further developing its international strategy.

"Invite students to speak about their experience of the internship abroad. It doesn't require a trip. " (alumni)

In line with reflecting on an international strategy, students indicate that Intercultural Communication should be allowed to be a compulsory course unit. After all, students perceive what they learn within this course unit as very valuable. In addition to this, students also indicate that they want to acquire more direct work experience in business and business topics. Students see chances for the programme to give them more experiences in how business, in an international context, works. Thinking about which course units are compulsory within the curriculum and are situated on the international and intercultural playing field, is seen by the panel as an opportunity to be taken when thinking about the international strategy.

"Intercultural communication, make it a compulsory course. " (student)

Additionally, the panel sees opportunities, within the development of an international strategy, to reflect on the place of the professional field within what the programme does regarding internationalisation. The panel invites the programme to further strengthen the link with the professional field, internationalisation and its place within various course units within the curriculum. The panel sees the careful consideration of how this can be shaped as an important opportunity. After all, the number of connections the programme has and can develop is an enormous opportunity.

In line with the different connections of the programme, students and professional field alike also indicated during the conversations that networking plays an important role in internationalisation and is also a strength of the programme. The panel sees an opportunity to structuralize this in the total scope of the programme, in their learning outcomes and in line with the chosen international strategy.

"Networking and networking events would help. Especially in the second year." (student)

When asked what the programme understands by internationalisation, the lecturers give an unambiguous answer in which two aspects of internationalisation come up clearly: intercultural and international (across borders). In addition, the panel notes that several 'INs' come up during the conversation: inclusive, international, intercultural, interaction and integration. The panel sees this as a strength and an ingredient that can be included in the above-mentioned development of an international strategy.

3.3 Focus theme: collaboration with the professional field

The programme expresses its dream to make the professional field a shareholder of the programme. Together with the panel, the programme will explore ways to build relationships and cooperation with the professional field.

From the conversations, it becomes clear that all actors see opportunities to invest stronger in the cooperation between the programme and the professional field. Lecturers indicate that focusing on deeper cooperation with the field should be a priority of the programme over the next two years. The panel appreciates the unanimity regarding the commitment to cooperation with the professional field and notes that there are already different ideas amongst the conversation partners.

It should be a priority of the programme to coordinate the process of having a dynamic and organic contact with the professional field. A staff member should be dedicated to the development of this network for a couple of years. (lecturer)

For instance, the programme clearly states its ambition to set up an advisory committee. The panel encourages the study programme to pursue this and to clearly define the role of the advisory committee and the topics to be discussed together with the professional field.

"[Primary focus of advisory board is to] be valuable, meaningful. It would be a forum for exchanging practice, knowledge, alignment of goals. " (professional field)

The panel sees opportunities for the programme to, among other things, develop the curriculum together with the professional field and thus further develop practical orientation as a 'sauce' throughout the programme. In this way, students can get a broad and deep taste of the industry where attention to mutual cooperation with the industry is central. In regards to this, lecturers and professional field see opportunities for the study programme in giving more insight into non-profit organizations as well.

The panel encourages the programme to take to heart the willingness of the professional field to cooperate with the study programme and to explore, together with the professional field, how the cooperation with the professional field can be expanded as an ecosystem within and outside the study programme. Developing a deliberate policy on cooperation with the professional field and, within this policy, defining what a good ecosystem entails and what cooperation ideally looks like, is an opportunity for the complete programme to seize.

"[Ideal collaboration with the professional field:] Creating an ecosystem in which people from the professional field and from the programme are collaborating and enter in dialogue about ways they can develop the programme together. " (professional field and lecturer)

Also in this conversation, students and alumni indicate that it is important to get a taste of practice with the professional field at different times, starting from phase 1, and this outside of internships. Networking and commitment to building different networks from the start are seen by students as an important aspect. The panel encourages the programme to explore ways to strengthen this even further.

3.4 Focus theme: soft skills and professional attitude in terms of immediate employability

The programme wants to focus on soft skills and a professional attitude in order to prepare and deliver students who are immediately employable. The programme will go into conversation with the panel to see how this dream can be further realised and what steps are needed to achieve this.

The panel concludes from the conversation that the programme already pays ample attention to soft skills within its curriculum. The various pre-conditions, such as a rich diversity of lecturers, offering different soft skills in different course units, contribute to this. The panel appreciated the various examples it heard during the interview regarding the use of soft skills by lecturers.

In analogy to the discussion on internationalisation, the panel also sees an opportunity here to further embed soft skills as part of the DNA of the study programme and to formalise this. Thinking together with lecturers about what soft skills should be offered within the programme, where they should be given a place in the curriculum and how they tie in with the DLR's are important steps in further formalisation. After all, during the discussion, various soft skills considered important such as adaptability, analytical skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, etc., come up from various points of view.

"[What are soft skills?] Critical thinking. Knowing how to assess the situation, analytical thinking, accuracy," (lecturer)

Furthermore, the panel sees opportunities to think about how these soft skills, and in regards to this the personal and professional development of students, can be followed up and assessed during the whole of the study programme.

In addition, lecturers see opportunities for more dialogue with each other about who teaches what and what the joint 'end product' of the programme is. After all, lecturers indicate that these contacts do exist between lecturers of different course units in a certain domain (financial courses, entrepreneurial courses, ...). Lecturers agree that lifting these contacts to the level of the entire programme helps to further develop and strengthen the IBT programme.

"Inform each other about what you are teaching, we have that in areas. But I don't really know what others are teaching. Is that a problem? No, but it would make IBT a better programme." (lecturer)

The panel encourages the programme to think of ways to encourage lecturers to consult each other more structurally across different course units and domains, and thus learning from each other. Teachers see this as quick wins as communication between different teachers is pleasant, smooth and often informal.

"Everyone is so open. The feeling I get with my colleagues, there is no problem with communicating. "
(lecturer)

Finally, the panel encourages also to sufficiently monitor a good balance between focusing on soft skills on the one hand and on hard skills on the other. Lecturers indicate that focusing on learning certain knowledge and skills (cf. hard skills) is also important within the profile of IBT.

"We are focusing too much on soft skills alone, whereas we should focus more on hard skills as a preparation for a first job." (lecturer)

In the conversation about soft skills both students and alumni see opportunities to have more connection with the professional field to find a good balance between hard skills and soft skills. They see opportunities to work with projects, simulating situations taken from the professional field, observations, ...

4. Ambitions of the programme

Short term (AY2223)

- Build into the curriculum even more subjects in which students gain experience in how business, in an international context, works. (1st Sem)
- Formalising stronger the present international DNA and establishing a clear strategy regarding internationalisation. (2nd Sem)
- Strengthen the link with the professional field by creating an Advisory Board. (2nd Sem)
- Using the opportunity of more dialogue among lecturers of subjects within similar areas of expertise to strengthen the programme. (2nd Sem)

Mid-term (AY2324)

- The relation between DLR's and the evaluation of BA Project should be improved. (1st Sem)
- Clarify to students the expectations regarding the International Internship. (1st Sem)
- Developing further the curriculum together with the professional field. (1st Sem)
- Create a lectures' council for the IBT programme. (1st Sem)
- Create & update educational matrixes. (2nd Sem)

Long term (AY2425)

- Monitor the balance between soft skills and hard skills in the curriculum.
- Aspire to international reputation - We should be able to position ourselves in the world.

5.1 Panel composition

For the educational mirror, Thomas More works with a panel consisting of a chairman, familiar with higher education, a domain expert, active (or having been) in the same or a related study programme, a representative of the industry, a student and an internal education expert.

The members of the panel are in any case independent of the study programme. They are neither involved in the programme as a supervisor/coach, nor as a teacher or evaluator, nor as a student.

Composition of the panel for the programme of International Tourism & Leisure:

- Frank Vonk, chairman. Frank Vonk MA, PhD, philosopher and Germanic scholar, works as a policy advisor for quality assurance in education and research. He regularly chairs panels for internal audits of various programmes at the University of Arnhem and Nijmegen (Netherlands), supervises research units in writing their Critical Reflections for external visitations and is a trained auditor according to the method of appreciative inquiry. He is also chairing two boards of examiners of the HAN Academy Organisation and Development and the Academy of Education (master programme). He still teaches the subjects ethics and intercultural communication and is a research methodologist.
- Gerard Sijben MSc domain expert; educationalist, with a main focus on innovation in Education and the impact for organisations, lecturers and leadership. He works as manager Educational Innovation and Quality Assurance at the International Business School at Fontys University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. In this position he as well is co-leading the Quality Agreements, made by the Dutch Government, for the entire Fontys organisation. In his previous position he took part in several in- and external audits of International Business bachelor programmes, was involved in several international educational projects and was leading the project to renew the Dutch educational profile of the IB bachelor programme.
- Ivo Fremau, workfield representative. Ivo holds a Master in Commercial Engineering (HIR) at University of Antwerp. Ivo has +30 years of business experience in the IT landscape. In international companies such as Xerox, Canon and HP, he fulfilled different commercial roles, from sales manager to business unit director. Today, Ivo leads the worldwide commercial activities of Nallian, a Belgian scale-up in aviation software.
- Inge Jochems, Speech Language Pathology and Audiology student at Thomas More Antwerp. She has an international background from living and studying abroad in Sydney and Bari. Furthermore she has a strong international network in the field of languages and communication.
- Quinten Verdonck, internal educational expert. Educational developer, focussing mainly on digitalisation of course content, digital assessment & curriculum development together with programme teams.

5.2 Programme visit

- 08.30 - 09.00 | Preparation panel
- 09.00 - 09.15 | Pitch by the programme
- 09.15 - 10.15 | Internationalisation
core: The programme aims to train students to be employable in a broad international professional field. Training world citizens is central to this. After all, the programme covers a broad target audience with different cultural backgrounds. This means that 'international context' plays an important role within the programme.
 - What does the programme need to realise the dream: 'immediately employable students in any cultural or regional context'?

- In what way can the programme further develop this international context (different cultural backgrounds,...) in the curriculum?
 - How do the different partners see this? (teachers, students, professional field)
 - In what ways can the programme impart different lenses and a broader international frame of mind to students? What does this mean for shaping the curriculum?

Dream: To deliver alumni who are immediately employable in any cultural or regional context.

- 10.45 - 11.45 | Collaboration and cooperation with the professional field
core: The programme aims to maintain and further develop (sustainable) relationships with the professional field. After all, the professional field plays an important role in function of the internship (at home and abroad).
 - General collaboration with the field:
 - In what ways can collaborations with the field be further developed in the curriculum?
 - What opportunities remain to be seized?
 - In what way can the programme guarantee that the student is sufficiently exposed to the professional field throughout the curriculum (in different opo's)?
 - What is needed from the field and within the programme to further develop this collaboration?

Dream: The professional field becoming a shareholder of the programme.

- 12.15 - 13.15 | Lunch
- 13.15 - 14.30 | soft skills and professional attitudes in terms of immediate employability
core: The programme wants to engage with the panel on soft skills and professional attitudes. The programme wants to consider how to further improve students' personal development. In addition, the programme aims to prepare and deliver students whom are immediately employable.
 - In what ways can the programme ensure that students are immediately employable?
 - What soft skills, skills in general, knowledge and attitudes do students need to achieve this?
 - And how do you evaluate this? What does this mean for our evaluation programme?
 - What does this mean for curriculum development and construction?
 - What role do teachers and the professional field play in this? What do they need to (be able to) fulfil this role?

Dream: Getting five stars - trust pilot from the employer of IBT alumni. ~ optimal employer/workforce satisfaction.

- 15.00 - 16.00 | Final level – achieved learning outcomes
core: Can the programme guarantee the level 6 and professional orientation of its graduates? Are they prepared to start as entry-level professionals?
- 16.00 - 17.30 | Internal consultation
- 17.30 - 18.00 | Feedback

5.3 Assessment level 6 Flemish qualification structure and professional orientation

Thomas More monitors the final level of the study programme through different perspectives and thus involves all relevant stakeholders in this assessment.

Professional field survey

This gives an indication of the satisfaction of the professional field about the graduates/students just before graduation. The survey measures the general satisfaction with the graduates as starting professionals; the professional knowledge and skills; the problem-solving capacity; the professional attitude and the degree to which the graduates keep up with the evolutions in the domain.

The programme specifies the way in which it assesses the learning outcomes and the final level of its students

The programme International Business Management – International Business and Trade assesses the learning outcomes and the final level of its students by Bachelor Thesis and International Internship.

Review of the assessment by a staff member of the education team

In preparation of the visit, the education expert in the panel examines the available documents related to the assessment of the final level: e.g. the ECTS sheets, manual, evaluation forms, products of the final assessment. The most important findings from this preliminary investigation are:

Final level achieved:

- In the assessment of the International Internship and Bachelor Thesis: the alignment of the rubrics with the learning outcomes (DLR) isn't clear. We want to know how and in what way the rubric are aligned with the learning outcomes.
- The way the Bachelor Thesis is constructed nowadays reads like a more formal research. The study programme addresses that the Bachelor Thesis isn't a Master Thesis.

Sustainable:

- The way the collaboration between the professional field and the study programme is organised isn't clear.
- The study programme addresses a change and has future plans to further develop Bachelor Thesis into more of a project. The organisation of this isn't yet clear from the preliminary investigation.

Assessment of the products in regard of the final level and discussion with recent graduates during the visit

The panel talked with

- recent graduates about their final assessment
- industry partners about their experiences with recent graduates;
- lecturers about the final assessment in general.

During the interview, the following aspects were discussed: guidance, effectiveness in function of the profession, experiences as a starting professional ...

The panel also reviewed products of the final assessment of a number of recent graduates.

5.4 Descriptors of the Flemish Qualifications Framework level 6

Knowledge and skills

- critically evaluate and combine knowledge and insights from a specific domain
- apply complex specialised skills linked to research results
- collect and interpret relevant data and use selected methods and tools innovatively to solve complex problems that are not familiar

Context, autonomy and responsibility

- act in complex and specialised contexts
- operate with full autonomy and initiative
- take co-responsibility for determining collective results

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