

Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations

Introduction

The globalization of higher education has led to the need to be able to compare and contrast the variety of qualifications granted by academic institutions for credit transfer, graduate study preparation and professional qualification. Similarly, jurisdictions with decentralized systems are looking for ways to measure academic equivalencies. In addition, in order to be able to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of all aspects of instruction, institutions, accrediting authorities and funding bodies have begun to clarify the outcomes expected of graduates. In response to a national initiative to state degree expectations, the Executive Heads of Ontario's publicly assisted universities asked OCAV to prepare a framework to reflect expectations of performance by the graduates of the Baccalaureate/Bachelors programs of Ontario's publicly assisted universities. The document, "Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations," developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents was subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ontario Universities on December 16, 2005.

The degree level expectations in OCAV's "Guidelines" elaborate the intellectual and creative development of students and the acquisition of relevant skills that have been widely, yet implicitly, understood. Here they are explicitly stated. Ontario's universities have agreed to use OCAV's "Guidelines" as a threshold framework for the expression of their own degree level expectations, which will be consistent with this document -- or may indeed go beyond it. In articulating its statement of degree level expectations, each institution is free to use language that reflects its own mission, ethos, values and culture.

| | Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i> | Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree: Honours <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i> |
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| 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge | <p>a) a general knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline</p> <p>b) a broad understanding of some of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) an ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> | <p>a) a developed knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts, methodologies, current advances, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline overall, as well as in a specialized area of a discipline</p> <p>b) a developed understanding of many of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) a developed ability to: i) gather, review, evaluate and interpret information; and ii) compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> |

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| | <p>d) some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p> | <p>d) a developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p> |
| 2. Knowledge of Methodologies | <p>... an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and • devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods. | <p>... an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; • devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods; and <p>describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship.</p> |
| 3. Application of Knowledge | <p>a) the ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to:</p> <p>i) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study; and</p> <p>b) the ability to use a basic range of established techniques to:</p> <p>i) analyse information;</p> <p>ii) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study;</p> <p>iii) propose solutions; and</p> <p>c) the ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p> | <p>a) the ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to:</p> <p>i) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study;</p> <p>iii) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline;</p> <p>iv) where appropriate use this knowledge in the creative process; and</p> <p>b) the ability to use a range of established techniques to:</p> <p>i) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information;</p> <p>ii) propose solutions;</p> <p>iii) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem;</p> <p>iv) solve a problem or create a new work; and</p> <p>c) the ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p> |

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| 4. Communication Skills | ... the ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences. | ... the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences. |
| 5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge | ... an understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations. | ... an understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analyses and interpretations. |
| 6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity | <p>a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making; • working effectively with others; <p>b) the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and</p> <p>c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</p> | <p>a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts; • working effectively with others; • decision-making in complex contexts; <p>b) the ability to manage their own learning in changing circumstances, both within and outside the discipline and to select an appropriate program of further study; and</p> <p>c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</p> |

Approved:
Council of Ontario Universities, December 2005

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Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents