

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

University marking/grading descriptors

1 Introduction

1.1 University-level marking/grading descriptors are available at both undergraduate and at postgraduate level. The undergraduate descriptors are applicable to students' work at all levels 4, 5 and 6 and the postgraduate descriptors are applicable to work at level 7. The descriptors have been developed with reference to the FHEQ and SEEC credit level descriptors.

The descriptors map to their respective University marking/grading scale (refer *General Examination and Assessment Regulations for taught courses*). The appropriate descriptors should be made available to students in course documentation.

- 1.2 The descriptors are generic and applicable to a broad range of academic disciplines. They aim to provide:
- a reference for articulating the standards of students' work with the use of clear, consistent statements to describe student performance and what a student needs to do to reach a particular grade/mark band;
 - a framework to indicate how a student can improve their performance, and to facilitate feedback to students.

2 Use of the grading descriptors

2.1 Students' work should be assessed against published assessment criteria and marked/graded using the generic descriptors, including where work is marked as pass or fail. The descriptors describe key features and general characteristics of assessed work associated with each grade and where necessary they can be adapted (refer 2.4). For students to understand what they are being assessed on, clear assessment criteria and grading descriptors are needed. It is also important to ensure that the learning outcomes of the assessment are integrated with the grading descriptors.

2.2 Reference is made to the given level of study¹ to emphasise the need to take this into account when considering the characteristics of students' work.

2.3 The descriptors are inter-related and should not be interpreted as a series of mutually exclusive categories. Students' work may demonstrate some characteristics of, for example, the pass and merit categories and the final mark/grade for the work should always be matter of academic judgement.

The emphasis given to various aspects of the descriptors will vary depending on the nature of the assessment task and discipline area. Examiners should use the whole of the marking scale, interpreting the descriptors in the context of their discipline.

2.4 The descriptors may be used as they are or contextualised in the design of assessment-specific marking criteria in the context of a particular discipline, mode of assessment and in the development of marking schemes. These should clearly link back to the generic descriptors.

Where the design of a module and its associated assessment task(s)/ brief(s) mean that it is not appropriate to grade students' work using these descriptors, for example multiple choice examinations or competency-based tasks, details of how the task(s) will be assessed should be clearly stated in the relevant module outline.

¹ Refer to SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education
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- 2.5 Where PSRB requirements or course-specific requirements indicate a pass/threshold mark which is different to the University norm², additional marking/grading criteria should be provided to students.
- 2.6 Supplementary grading descriptors may be used for some modules for additional marking bands e.g. 90-100 or 35-39 and these should be clearly stated for students in the relevant course documentation.

² Refer *General Examination and Assessment Regulations for taught courses*
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UNDERGRADUATE GRADING DESCRIPTORS (levels 4, 5 and 6)

80-100 A+ First class/Distinction	
All learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have been achieved to an exceptionally high level	An outstanding response to the task The work demonstrates most or all of the following characteristics beyond that expected for work at the given level of study within the discipline:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional display of understanding, exploration, insight and/or research • All specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate, have been adhered to • The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are exemplary throughout • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in an original way • Inspirational, innovative and authoritative - evidence of intellectual rigour, independence of judgement and insightful contextualisation, including relevant theory/literature/artefacts/performance • Evidence of very high quality analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Consistently displays very high levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement
70-79 A A- First class/Distinction	
All learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have been achieved to a high standard and many at an exceptionally high level	An excellent response to the task The work demonstrates most or all of the following characteristics in relation to those expected at the given level of study within the discipline:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth understanding, exploration, insight and/or research • All specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate, have been adhered to • The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are excellent throughout. • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in an original way • Insightful contextualisation, including relevant theory/ literature/ artefacts/ performance • Evidence of high to very high quality analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Demonstrates high levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement

60-69 B+ B B- Upper Second class/ Merit	
All learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have been met fully at a good or very good standard	A good to very good response to the task The work demonstrates most or all of the following characteristics in relation to those expected at the given level of study within the discipline:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good to very good understanding and exploration, some insight and/or thorough research • No significant inaccuracies, misunderstandings or errors • The specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate, have been adhered to • The work is well organised, coherent and the standard of presentation, including referencing where appropriate, is at least good • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a comprehensive and appropriate way • Appropriate contextualisation, including relevant theory/ literature/ artefacts/performance • Evidence of high quality analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Demonstrates good levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement
50-59 C+ C C- Lower Second class/Pass	
All learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have been met and some may have been achieved at a good standard	A sound, competent response to the task The work demonstrates most or all of the following characteristics in relation to those expected at the given level of study within the discipline:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound understanding and exploration, some insight and/or appropriate research • No significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings • No significant aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate • The work is suitably organised³ and the standard of presentation, including referencing where appropriate, is at least sound • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a standard way • Sound analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Demonstrates some levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement

³ Clearly presented but with little development

40-49 D+ D D- Third class/Pass	
All learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have just been met	An adequate, but weak response to the task The work demonstrates most or all of the following characteristics in relation to those expected at the given level of study within the discipline:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with little insight and/or minimal research • Some minor inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings • Some minor aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task, including word limit/time limit where appropriate • The work is largely descriptive⁴, some parts of the work are disorganised and the standard of presentation, including referencing where appropriate, is barely adequate • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a basic and/or poor way • Some, but limited, evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Demonstrates limited levels of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement
30-39 E+ E E- Fail	
One or more of the learning outcomes/ assessment criteria have not been met	An unsatisfactory response to the task The work may display some strengths but these are outweighed by several weak features in relation to the expectations for the given level of study within the discipline, such as:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with very little insight and/or minimal research • Some significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings • Insufficient attention paid to some of the assessment criteria and some significant aberrations from the specifications for the assessment task⁵ • The work is too descriptive, parts of the work are disorganised and unclear and the standard of presentation, including referencing where appropriate, is poor • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed in a poor way • Insufficient evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Little evidence of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement

⁴ Although generally coherent there is some lack of clarity of thought or expression. Poor quality in at least one area

⁵ Such as not keeping to the word limit/time limit and/or minor elements of the work missing

10-29 F+ F Fail	
Most of the learning outcomes/assessment criteria have not been met	An unsatisfactory response to the task Any strengths of the work are heavily outweighed by many weak features in relation to the expectations for the given level of study within the discipline, such as:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited understanding and/or exploration of major ideas with little or no insight and/or minimal research • Several significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings • Insufficient attention paid to several of the assessment criteria and some serious deviations from the specifications for the assessment task⁶ • The work is descriptive and the standard of presentation including referencing where appropriate is very poor • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed inadequately • Little evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • Little to no evidence of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement
0-9 F- Fail	
Almost none of the learning outcomes/assessment criteria have been met	An unsatisfactory response to the task The work fails to meet the requirements in relation to those expected at the given level of study within the discipline, exemplified by most or all of the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost no understanding and/or exploration of ideas • Many serious inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings • No attention paid to all or most of the assessment criteria and/or to the specifications for the assessment task⁷ • Very poor standard of presentation including referencing where appropriate • The work has been approached and/or executed/performed inadequately • No evidence of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical appraisal • No evidence of initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making and achievement

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⁶ Such as not keeping to the word limit/time limit and/or major elements of the work missing

⁷ As footnote 6