

University of Hull Postgraduate Taught and Integrated Masters Stage Grading Descriptors for Students Registered and Studying on Level 7 Modules after 31-08-2016.

1 Introduction

The University of Hull Grading Descriptors for Level 7 have been developed to align with the Quality Assurance Agency's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2008) and the SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education (2010). The appropriate descriptors for the level of study that students are undertaking should be made available to students in all programme and module documentation.

The descriptors outlined in this document are necessarily generic as they need to be applicable to all academic disciplines. They aim to provide a framework for articulating the expected standard of students' work. The framework provides clear and consistent statements to describe students' performance which, in turn, facilitate transparency in feedback to students, helping students to understand how to improve their performance.

2 Using the grading descriptors: some key principles

The descriptors included here outline the key features and general characteristics of assessed work associated with each grade-band. However, in order that students are able to understand exactly how they are being assessed and the standard of work they are expected to achieve, their work should always be assessed against published assessment criteria. The programme of study's published assessment criteria should create a direct link between the learning outcomes of the module(s) under study, the generic descriptors contained in this document and the particular level of study (i.e. Level 7) at which the student is working.

The grading descriptors outlined in this document are not mutually exclusive. Students' work may demonstrate some characteristics of, for example, the 50-59 and 60-69 categories. The final grade for the work should always be matter of academic judgement based on the balance of this. Examiners should be prepared to award the full range of marks and should interpret the descriptors in the context of their discipline, field of study or area of practice. The emphasis given to each descriptor, and the way it is used in the published assessment criteria will necessarily vary depending on the nature of the assessment task, the level of study and the disciplinary area. For example, module leaders will need to be able to identify and explain what exemplary, outstanding, excellent, good or satisfactory looks like in relation to the learning outcomes of their module in order that students are able to understand why they have received the grade they have and how they could improve their work.

In relation to this, where Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements or course-specific requirements indicate a pass/threshold mark which is different to the University norm outlined in this framework, additional marking/grading criteria should be provided to students with an explanation as to why and how this differs from the norm. Work representing unsafe or unfit practice, for students registered on professional courses with fitness to practise requirements, will be marked as a fail.

3. University Pass Mark

All students commencing Level 7 modules on or after 1st September 2016 will be required to achieve a mark of 50 or higher to pass.

Exemplary Distinction

90-100

All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met to an exemplary standard.

The work represents an **exemplary** response to the task set and attains the very highest standards of scholarship (authoritative and publishable) that can be expected of a level 7 submission. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed in a highly original way;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are exemplary throughout;
- There is an exemplary standard of written and/or oral communication and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays the highest level of accuracy and understanding.
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Higher Order Characteristics:

- There is an exemplary and compelling display of in-depth understanding, perceptive exploration and interpretation, stimulating and rigorous argument and striking insight;
- The work reaches an exemplary standard of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and consistent evidence of originality of thought and expression;
- Use and application of a depth and breadth of sources, case studies, contextual evidence, ideas, concepts, theory and other relevant information and artefacts is exemplary;
- The work displays an exemplary understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant practice and standards);
- The work attains the highest standards of scholarship that can be expected at Level 7, showing exemplary research skills and immediate potential to enter authoritatively into debates at the forefront of the academic discipline or area of professional practice

Outstanding Distinction

80-89

All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met to a very high standard.

The work represents an **outstanding** response to the task set, attains some of the high standards of scholarship and shows real potential to influence the discipline or area of practice. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed in an original way;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are outstanding throughout;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is outstanding and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays the highest level of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- There is an outstanding display of in-depth understanding, perceptive exploration and interpretation, stimulating and rigorous argument and striking insight;
- The work reaches an outstanding standard of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and evidence of originality of thought and expression;
- The use and application of a depth and breadth of sources, case studies, contextual evidence, ideas, concepts, theory and other relevant information and artefacts is outstanding;
- The work displays a very high standard of understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant practice and standards);
- The work is close to the highest standards of scholarship that can be expected at Level 7, showing outstanding research skills and potential to enter authoritatively into debates at the forefront of the academic discipline or area of professional practice.

**Distinction
70-79**

All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been achieved to a high standard and some to a very high standard.

The work represents an **excellent** response to the task set, mostly attains the highest standards of scholarship that can be expected of a Level 7 submission and shows potential to influence the discipline or area of practice. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed in an original way;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are excellent throughout;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is excellent and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays the highest level of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- There is an excellent display of in-depth understanding, perceptive exploration and interpretation, stimulating and rigorous argument and striking insight;
- The work displays a high standard of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and evidence of originality of thought and expression;
- There is excellent use and application of a depth and breadth of sources, case studies, contextual evidence, ideas, concepts, theory and other relevant information and artefacts;
- The work displays high levels of understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- The work provides a strong understanding and critique of the current state of knowledge and its application in the academic discipline or area of practice and displays an excellent level of scholarship. There may be scope for improvement in some areas in order to make the work of publishable quality.

**High Merit
65-69**

All learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been achieved to a very good standard.

The work represents a **very good** response to the task set, and attains very good standards of scholarship. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed to a very good standard;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are very good throughout;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is very good and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays very good levels of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- There is a very good display of in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis with some evidence of insight;
- The work displays a very good standard of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and some evidence of originality of thought and expression (although this may lack finesse);
- The submission shows thorough use of a relevant sources and evidence, but lacks the breadth and depth of engagement required for a distinction. Some awareness of the limitations of the evidence presented is lacking;
- The work displays a very good understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- The work provides a very good understanding and critique of the current state of knowledge and its application in the academic discipline or area of practice. Levels of scholarship are good, but there is be scope for improvement in some areas in order for the work to be of publishable quality.

**Merit
60-64**

All learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been achieved to a good standard.

The work represents a **good** response to the task set, and the standards of scholarship are mostly good. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All of the core requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed to a good standard;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are good throughout;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is good and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays good levels of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- Errors, where present, are extremely minor and do not detract from the overall standard of the work;
- The work displays some good examples of in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis with some evidence of insight;
- The work displays evidence of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and some evidence of originality of thought and expression (although this may lack finesse);
- The submission uses relevant sources and evidence, but lacks the breadth and depth of engagement required for a distinction. Awareness of the limitations of the evidence presented may be lacking;
- The work displays a good understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- Understanding and critique of the current state of knowledge and its application in the academic discipline or area of practice are well demonstrated and raise the work above the minimum requirements of a pass grade.

**Pass
55-59**

All learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met satisfactorily with some met to a good standard.

The work represents a **satisfactory** response to the task set, with standards of scholarship likely to be undermined by a generally poor linkage of issues and themes within the task set. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- All of the core requirements are met and the work has been approached, executed or performed to a satisfactory standard;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are on the whole sound, although some instances of poor or limited citation may be present;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is reasonable and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays adequate levels of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- Errors may be present but these are not significant enough to impact on the ability of the work to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the minimum level;
- The work is conscientious and attentive to the subject matter but engages more in description (with generally poor linkage of issues and themes) than in showcasing in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis;
- Evidence of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement, insight and originality of thought and expression is occasional and limited;
- The submission uses a relatively limited range of sources and evidence. There is some assessment of the evidence presented, but this is largely underdeveloped and the limitations of the evidence are not fully articulated or understood;
- The work displays some, but limited, understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- Understanding and critique of the current state of knowledge and its application in the academic discipline or area of practice is not fully demonstrated, meaning that the work is not lifted above the requirement of a Pass.

**Marginal Pass
50-54**

All learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met, but to a minimum standard.

The work represents an **adequate, but weak**, response to the task set, with standards of scholarship undermined by a generally poor linkage of issues and themes within the task set. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- The core requirements are narrowly met and the work has been approached, executed or performed at the minimum satisfactory standard to achieve a pass grade. There is significant scope for improvement;
- The organisation, structure and standard of presentation of the work, including referencing where appropriate, are satisfactory, but a number of inconsistencies in citation may be present;
- The standard of written and/or oral communication is acceptable and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques displays acceptable levels of accuracy and understanding.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- Errors are likely to be present, which mean that the work cannot rise above the very minimum pass grade;
- The work is conscientious and attentive to the subject matter but engages largely in description, and has poor linkages between issues and themes. It shows some but very limited evidence of in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis;
- Evidence of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement, insight and originality of thought and expression is occasional and very limited;
- The submission uses a range of sources and evidence which is only just satisfactory. There is some assessment of the evidence presented, but this is largely underdeveloped and the limitations of the evidence are not fully articulated or understood;
- The work displays some, but limited, understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- Understanding and critique of the current state of knowledge and its application in the academic discipline or area of practice is not fully demonstrated resulting in conclusions which do not always reflect the complexity of the subject matter.

**Marginal Fail
40-49**

One or more of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have not been met.

The work represents an **unsatisfactory** response to the task set. Strengths of the work are outweighed by its weaknesses. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- The core requirements are not met and the work has not been approached, executed or performed to a satisfactory standard;
- The work is poorly structured and standards of presentation are inadequate. Citation and referencing may be present but are likely to be limited and poor. There may be some inaccurate representation of the work of others;
- The written and/or oral communication and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques are not of a satisfactory standard.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- Some major errors or inaccuracies are present which mean the work is unable to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria even at the minimum level;
- The work only superficially engages with the subject matter, engages largely in description, and shows poor linkages between issues and themes. Arguments are not fully developed and evidence of in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis is weak;
- Evidence of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement, insight and originality of thought and expression is very limited;
- The submission uses a very limited range of sources and evidence and/or shows limited differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of the sources used. Assessment of the evidence presented is underdeveloped and the limitations of the evidence are not fully articulated or understood;
- The work displays limited understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- Overly simple conclusions are drawn which do not reflect the complexity of current thinking in the discipline or area of practice.

**Fail
1-39**

The majority of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have not been met.

The work represents a **very unsatisfactory** response to the task set. Strengths of the work are outweighed by its weaknesses. It is likely to demonstrate most or all of the following characteristics:

Technical Characteristics:

- The core requirements are not met and the work has not been approached, executed or performed to a satisfactory standard;
- The work lacks structure and standards of presentation are wholly inadequate. Citation and referencing are limited, poor, irrelevant and/or dated and include inaccurate representation of the work of others;
- The written and/or oral communication and the use of disciplinary terminology and techniques are not of a satisfactory standard.

Higher Order Academic Characteristics:

- Significant errors or inaccuracies are present;
- The work only superficially engages with the subject matter, is descriptive and shows little linkage between issues and themes. Arguments are not developed and it may be confused and incoherent;
- Evidence of in-depth understanding, exploration, interpretation and critical analysis is absent;
- Evidence of creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement, insight and originality of thought and expression is absent;
- The submission lacks supporting evidence and/or shows limited differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of the evidence used. Any limitations of the evidence are not articulated or understood;
- The work displays almost no understanding of the link between theory and its application (and where relevant, practice and standards);
- Overly simple conclusions are drawn which do not reflect the complexity of current thinking in the discipline or area of practice.

**Non-submission
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