



Marking Criteria and descriptors for Dissertations

M.A. (Research and Taught)

APPROVED BY FACULTY BOARD AND SENATE

80 and above (grade A): Work of excellent quality at Distinction level, which surpasses that associated with the 70–79 level *in at least one* of the following areas:

- originality in the conceptual understanding, critical insight, hypotheses, use of methodology, or application of knowledge;
- subtlety of interpretation;
- power of critical analysis;
- critical evaluation of current research;
- mastery of key texts

Such work is likely to include work of such a high quality that it *either* falls comfortably within the level of performance characteristic of a degree at a still higher level (e.g., PhD) *or* would merit publication in a refereed publishing venue of professional standing. Such work will be very well written and presented. A dissertation gaining this mark will unambiguously demonstrate the ability to pursue research at doctoral level.

70–79 (grade B): Work of very good quality at Merit level, which surpasses that associated with the 55–69 level in several areas, such as the following:

- originality in the conceptual understanding, critical insight, hypotheses, use of methodology, or application of knowledge;
- subtlety of interpretation;
- power of critical analysis;
- critical evaluation of current research;
- mastery of key texts;
- will be written and presented to very good academic standards, showing no obvious faults.

Such work will be written and presented to high academic standards. A dissertation gaining this mark suggests very strong potential for pursuing research at Doctoral level.

55–69 (grade C): Work of good quality, above average performance at Pass level, which may include superior achievement in areas such as those designated above for the 70–79 level, but which will not be consistent, as widespread, or as fully demonstrated. Performance at this level surpasses the quality of work in the 50–54 range *in several areas*, such as the following:

- information deployed (normally going beyond reliance on standard secondary sources);
- demonstrate a reasonable grasp of all the principal materials relevant to the subject and link them into an at least partly sustained argument from premises to conclusions;
- have an overall structure which is logical if not fully thought through;

- display some evidence of analytical or critical ability in the handling of sources and evidence;
- be unlikely to show originality;
- will be written and presented to adequate academic standards, showing no obvious faults.

50–54 (grade D): Work of fair but below average quality at Pass level. This work will have similar characteristics to work in the 55–69 category but will be less secure in some key areas, such as:

- intellectual grasp;
- content;
- capacity to sustain logical argument;
- analytical and critical ability;
- presentation.

45–49 (grade E): Work of marginal quality at Pass level. This work

- contains most but not all of the basic materials necessary for a satisfactory treatment of the topic
- fails to marshal them effectively in terms of overall structure or sustained argument
- demonstrates some acquaintance with key secondary literature but is unsophisticated in using it
- is marred by easily rectifiable defects in presentation (e.g. bibliographical incompleteness or inconsistency).

0–44 (grade F): Unsatisfactory, failing work. This work

- presents some, but not enough, material relevant to the subject
- is significantly incomplete or unbalanced in judgement
- fails to structure the work through argument from premises to conclusions
- relies too heavily on secondary sources
- contains partially garbled information, or presents statements of opinion inadequately supported by evidence
- is scrappily presented with inadequate citation or does not acknowledge its sources.