

University of Malta

General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards

Grade Descriptors pp. 13–14

Descriptor	Mark Range	Grade
<p>Work of excellent quality Superior performance showing a comprehensive and critical understanding and application of the subject matter. Evidence of extensive additional reading/research/work.</p>	80% - 100%	A
<p>Work of very good quality Performance showing a very good working knowledge of the subject matter. Evidence of a considerable amount of additional reading/ research/work.</p>	70% - 79%	B
<p>Work of average quality Average performance, showing a good working knowledge of the subject matter. Evidence of sufficient reading/research/work.</p>	55% - 69%	C
<p>Work of fair but below average quality Performance showing considerable but incomplete understanding of the subject matter. Evidence of a fair amount of reading/research/work.</p>	50% - 54%	D
<p>Work of marginal quality Performance showing minimal understanding of the subject matter, with no evidence of additional reading/research/work, which must be compensated by higher marks in other Units in order to be eligible for the Postgraduate Award.</p>	45% - 49%	E
<p>Unsatisfactory, failing work in any Study-Unit other than a Dissertation.</p>	0% - 44%	F
<p>Unsatisfactory, poor work in the Dissertation Study-Unit.</p>	0% - 44%	F
<p>Unsatisfactory, failing work in a practicum Study-Unit, where such is indicated in the course Bye-Laws</p>	0% - 54%	F
<p>Unjustified Absence for an assessment, or failure to hand in assigned work in time, or ineligibility to take assessment due to unapproved Absence from lectures shall be considered as F with 0 marks in the calculation of the average mark.</p>	0%	F

Final Weighted Average Mark	Classification
80 - 100%	Pass with Distinction
70 - 79%	Pass with Merit
50 - 69%	Pass

Assessment Criteria for Postgraduate Dissertations and Study-Units Department of Theatre Studies, School of Performing Arts

The department currently offers three different postgraduate degrees: M.A. by Research, a mainly taught M.A., and a PhD. It is also involved in an M.A. by research programme in Performing Arts. While it needs to be acknowledged that all these programmes lead to postgraduate qualifications, there are two major variables: length of dissertation and level of qualification.

M.A. by research	THS5099	80 ECTS	40,000/50,000 words. PaR: 20,000/30,000 words + presentation of artistic practice + curated documentation.
M.A. mainly taught	THS5055	30 ECTS	15,000/20,000 words.
Ph.D.			80,000/100,000 words. PaR: 30,000/50,000 words + presentation of practice.

MA (Research)

80–100 (grade A): Work of excellent quality at Distinction level which is manifested in the following:

- Highly sophisticated research design and methodology, carefully, and critically applied to the research question;
- Evidence of innovation and originality in structuring a compelling argument, in integration and synthesis of ideas;
- Sophisticated discrimination in selection of sources in both depth and breadth, showing strong evidence of understanding, as well as originality in contextualisation of sources and focus on the subject matter;
- Outstanding, highly sophisticated critical analysis, exceptionally meticulous, and well-supported.

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. Ph.D.) 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 (or effectiveness) of critical analysis;
- Critical evaluation of current research;
- Understanding of research methodology and its implications;
- Mastery of a significant body of data;
- 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 good potential for pursuing research at doctoral level.

55–69 (grade C): Work of average quality, 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;
- 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 demonstrate some or all of these qualities:

- Limited reading in the field;
- Identification of some pertinent sources showing some superficiality in understanding and/or sources are not used to contextualise topic;
- Limited organisation of ideas – analysis is mainly descriptive with limited attempt at critical judgement;
- Limited research design and methodology, superficially applied to the research question, adequate structuring of a limited argument;
- Limited intellectual engagement with issues and ideas – development shows some superficiality and inconsistencies;
- Adequate use of language, evidence of proofreading with some errors, application of academic conventions with some inconsistencies;
- The overall impact of the work is satisfactory to warrant a marginal pass.

0–49 (grade F): Unsatisfactory, failing work. Work which:

- 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 scappily presented with inadequate citation or does not acknowledge its sources.

MA (Research) – by Practice as Research

These criteria will be used for MA in Theatre Studies dissertations of 20,000 to 30,000 words along with the presentation of artistic practice and curated documentation (Practice as Research).

80–100 (grade A): Work of excellent quality at Distinction level which surpasses that associated with the 70-79 level in the following:

- Highly sophisticated research design and methodology, carefully, and critically applied to the research question, and realised through an integrated Practice as Research approach combining practical work and written research;
- Evidence of innovation and originality in structuring a compelling argument, in integration and synthesis of ideas;
- Sophisticated discrimination in the selection of source materials in both depth and breadth, showing strong evidence of understanding, as well as originality in contextualisation of sources as they inform the practical and written components;
- Excellent understanding of specialised and/or applied areas of theoretical, technical, and research-based knowledge;
- Outstanding, sophisticated and well-directed presentation, logically structured, to high academic and artistic standards.

Such work will be very well written, directed, and presented and is likely to fall comfortably within the level of performance characteristic of a degree at a higher level (e.g. Ph.D.) or professional performance, or would merit publication in a refereed journal. 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:

- Very good research design and methodology, carefully and thoughtfully applied to the research question, and appropriately realised through the integration of practical work and written research within a Practice as Research framework;
- Good selection of, and engagement with, source materials, demonstrating their relevance to both the practical and written components;

- Largely independent and professional in the approach taken to complex problem solving;
- Competence in argumentation, displaying coherence in integration of ideas, and some subtlety of interpretation;
- Uses a range of techniques appropriately and demonstrates creativity in application;
- Competent understanding of specialised and/or applied areas of theoretical, technical and research-based knowledge;
- Competent in analysing, interpreting, and critically evaluating complex data, materials, or processes;
- Written and presented logically, to very good academic and artistic standards.

Such work will be written, directed, and presented to high academic and professional standards. A dissertation gaining this mark suggests good potential for pursuing research at doctoral level.

55–69 (grade C): Work of average quality, 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:

- Acceptable research design and methodology, applied to the research question and realised through a combination of practical and written work within a Practice as Research framework;
- Reasonable selection of source materials, with some engagement and indication of their relevance to the practical and written components;
- Demonstration of reasonable competence in solving complex problems;
- Reasonable competence in constructing an at least partly sustained argument from premises to conclusions;
- Uses techniques effectively and demonstrates some creativity in application;
- Displays some evidence of understanding of specialised or applied areas of theoretical, technical and research-based knowledge;
- Some evidence of analytical or critical ability in evaluation of data, materials, or processes;
- Written and presented to reasonable academic and artistic standards.

50–54 (grade D): Work of fair but below average quality at Pass level. This work will demonstrate some or all of these qualities:

- Limited research design and methodology, superficially applied to the research question;
- Relevant but limited reading in the field;
- Some ability demonstrated in problem solving;

- Limited organisation of ideas; argument is mainly descriptive with limited attempt at critical judgement;
- Some practical or technical competence but limited in terms of creative application;
- Limited evidence of understanding of specialised or applied areas of theoretical, technical and research-based knowledge;
- Limited analysis; engagement with issues and ideas shows some superficiality and inconsistencies;
- Some superficiality or limitation in the presentation of the work.

0–49 (grade F): Unsatisfactory, failing work. Work which demonstrates some of these limitations:

- Insufficient research design and limited methodology, research question not fully articulated, with little or no effective integration between practice and writing within a Practice as Research framework;
- Insufficient sources demonstrated, with little evidence of engagement with materials relevant to either the practical work or the written component;
- Inadequate ability to solve problems;
- Fails to structure the work through argument from premises to conclusions;
- Little practical or technical competence or innovation shown;
- Little evidence of understanding of specialised or applied areas of theoretical, technical, and research-based knowledge;
- Little evidence of analytical or critical ability, presenting statements of opinion, inadequately supported by practice, theory, or research;
- Presentation is poor, with the practice and written submissions inadequately structured, possibly with inadequate citation or unacknowledged sources.

MA (Taught)

80–100 (grade A): Work of excellent quality at Distinction level which is manifested in the following:

- Highly sophisticated research design and methodology, carefully and critically applied to the research question;
- Evidence of ability in structuring a compelling argument, displaying originality in integration and synthesis of ideas;
- Sophisticated discrimination in selection of sources in both depth and breadth, showing strong evidence of understanding, as well as originality in contextualisation of sources and focus on the subject matter;
- Outstanding, highly sophisticated critical analysis, exceptionally meticulous and well-supported.

Such work will be very well written and presented. A dissertation or study-unit 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 (or effectiveness) of critical analysis;
- Critical evaluation of current research;
- Understanding of research methodology and its implications;
- Assured knowledge of a significant body of data;
- 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 or study-unit gaining this mark suggests good potential for pursuing research at doctoral level.

55–69 (grade C): Work of average quality, 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;
- 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 demonstrate some or all of these qualities:

- Limited reading in the field;
- Identification of some pertinent sources showing some superficiality in understanding and/or sources are not used to contextualise topic
- Limited organisation of ideas – analysis is mainly descriptive with limited attempt at critical judgement;
- Limited research design and methodology, superficially applied to the research question, adequate structuring of a limited argument;
- Limited intellectual engagement with issues and ideas – development shows some superficiality and inconsistencies;
- Adequate use of language, evidence of proofreading with some errors, application of academic conventions with some inconsistencies;
- The overall impact of the work is satisfactory to warrant a marginal pass.

0–49 (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 scappily presented with inadequate citation or does not acknowledge its sources.