



CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX A

University Marks Scale, Marking Descriptors and Qualification Descriptors

2025-26

Applicable to all cohorts

In the Code of Practice on Assessment and all Appendices the term “student” includes apprentices on degree apprenticeship programmes

University Marks Scale, Marking Descriptors and Qualification Descriptors

Undergraduate Non-Clinical Modular Degree Programmes

1. Marks scale

- 1.1 For ***undergraduate non-clinical modular degrees*** marks awarded on ***individual modules*** are categorised as follows:

70 to 100	First class
60 to 69	Upper second class (2.1)
50 to 59	Lower second class (2.2)
40 to 49	3rd class
35 to 39	Narrow fail (but compensation may be allowed in accordance with the University's rules)
Less than 35	Fail

- 1.2 This scale assumes rounding, if necessary, to the nearest whole number, with decimal places below five being rounded down and decimal places of five or more being rounded up.
- 1.3 The rules for compensation are described in the Model for Non-Clinical First Degree Programmes (Appendix B of this Code).
- 1.4 The system for the classification of three-year non-clinical undergraduate degrees described in Appendix I of this Code will be used to classify such degrees. The system for the classification of four-year and five-year non-clinical undergraduate degrees is described in Appendix J of this Code.

2. Marking descriptors

- 2.1 Each Department will have its own set of qualitative marking descriptors which describe what each mark range represents in terms of student achievement in that particular subject. These descriptors will relate to the appropriate ***subject benchmark statement(s)*** which have been produced by each national subject community.
- 2.2 In addition to this, each Department will be required to demonstrate how English language proficiency has been checked in all submissions with a written element in the context of the subject area.
- 2.3 Where marking criteria already includes a graded element for spelling and grammar or equivalent, there is no need to include any further check. Where assessment criteria, which has written components, does not include an element for checking English language, this should be added. This does not have to be graded but must indicate that a check for English language has been made.
- 2.4 In very general terms students' achievement is categorised as follows:
- 2.4.1 Marks in the range 70-100 (First class honours)

Written examinations: Candidates will have demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the whole range of material selected for the test. Answers will be clear, well-structured, directly relevant and logical. There will be a high level of accuracy in the presentation of factual

or numerical work or flair and some originality in dealing with interpretative material.

Projects and essays: The work must provide evidence that the candidate's command of data or literature is either broad or detailed. The work will contain evidence of good critical analysis and/or an original contribution.

Dissertations: The dissertation will display very good research and sound methodology and demonstrate that the candidate has read and understood the subject widely. Conclusions should be well-argued and justified. Unavoidable defects or incomplete conclusions will be recognised by the candidate and explained satisfactorily. The very best work may be of publishable quality.

2.4.2 Marks in the range 60-69 (Upper second class)

Written examinations: Candidates must demonstrate a sound understanding of the material and provide evidence of general reading. Answers will be clear, competently structured, logical and have general relevance. There will be a good level of accuracy in the presentation of factual or numerical work. The methodology or arguments employed must be largely accurate. In dealing with interpretative material, candidates must demonstrate a competent level of critical evaluation.

Projects and essays: Work must be thorough, clear and show an understanding of the context of the candidate's contribution. Evidence must be shown of efficient and competent use of data or literature.

Dissertations: Arguments must be sound and of a reasonable depth and well-presented in an appropriate context, although originality is likely to be limited.

2.4.3 Marks in the range 50-59 (Lower second class)

Written examinations: Work must be generally accurate and presented in an adequate framework but is likely to be largely based on the teaching inputs. Arguments must be clear, although they may not be well-developed or reflect a wider appreciation of the subject. Small errors and omissions are likely to be present.

Projects and essays: The candidate's treatment of data or literature will be basically sound but underdeveloped.

Dissertations: The work will display evidence of some reading but the methodology and criticism are likely to be largely underdeveloped.

2.4.4 Marks in the range 40-49 (Third class)

Written examinations: Candidates will display adequate but limited understanding and knowledge of the concepts. Answers are likely to be somewhat lacking in structure. There are likely to be errors and omissions and the evidence provided to support arguments will be very limited.

Projects and essays: The candidate will show some understanding of the topic but the range of data used will be very limited and its treatment basic and unimaginative. The methodologies and arguments employed will contain some flaws.

Dissertations: The work will contain evidence of limited reading but is unlikely to demonstrate any depth of knowledge. Arguments/discussion are likely to be largely derivative and lacking much analytical or critical strength.

2.4.5 Marks in the range 35-39

Marks awarded in this range indicate that the candidate has narrowly failed to achieve the standards required for a third class mark but this failure may be compensated by better levels of achievement in other components of their studies.

2.4.6 Marks below 35

Candidates will be unable to demonstrate adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject area or to sustain arguments. Significant errors and omissions will be present in the work. Work is likely to be unstructured and ill-presented and may not address the question or task set.

2.5 Pass/fail assessment

The marks scale and marking descriptors are not applicable to unweighted pass/fail assessment components, as the learning outcomes of such assessment must be of a nature where they can be met or not, with no possible differentiation for achievement above the threshold. Numerical marks must not be assigned to pass/fail assessment (i.e either 0 for a fail or 100 for a pass).

3. Qualifications descriptors

3.1 Qualifications awarded by the University are consistent with the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* which has been developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

3.2 Undergraduate qualifications awarded by the University are categorised as follows:

3.2.1 Certificate in Higher Education

A Certificate in Higher Education may be awarded to a candidate who gains at least 120 credits at a level equivalent to the first year of an honours degree (FHEQ level 4). Such students will have demonstrated:

- (a) Knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their areas of study and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study;
- (b) An ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

3.2.2 Diploma in Higher Education

A Diploma in Higher Education may be awarded to a candidate who gains at least 240 credits of which at least 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the second year of an honours degree (FHEQ level 5). Such students will have demonstrated:

- (a) Knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study and the way in which those principles have developed;
- (b) Ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context;
- (c) Knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s) and an ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study;
- (d) An understanding of the limits of their knowledge and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

3.2.3 Degree without honours

A degree without honours may be awarded to a candidate who gains at least 300 credits of which at least 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the first year of an honours degree (FHEQ level 4), at least 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the second year of an honours degree (i.e. a minimum of 90 credits at FHEQ level 5) and at least 60 credits must be at a level equivalent to the third year of an honours degree (FHEQ level 6). Such students will have demonstrated:

- (a) Knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study and the way in which those principles have developed;
- (b) Ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context;
- (c) Knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s) and an ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study;
- (d) An understanding of the limits of their knowledge and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

3.2.4 Honours Degree

A degree with honours may be awarded to a candidate who gains at least 360 credits of which at least 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the first year of an honours degree (FHEQ level 4), at least 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the second year of an honours degree (i.e. a minimum of 90 credits at FHEQ level 5) and 120 credits must be at a level equivalent to the third year of an honours degree (i.e. a minimum of 90 credits at FHEQ level 6). Such students will have demonstrated:

- (a) A systematic understanding of the key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at or informed by the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline;

- (b) An ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline;
- (c) Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 1. To devise and sustain arguments and/or solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of the discipline;
 2. To describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship in the discipline;
 3. To appreciate the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge;
 4. To manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources, e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline.