

## Grade Descriptors

Grade descriptors aim to provide:

- a) A point of reference to support academic judgement in relation to the standard of students' work across grade bands.
  - b) Support the facilitation of feedback to students.
  - c) Guidance from level 3-7 to indicate to students the relative changes in demands as they progress through the level(s) of their course and onto postgraduate level.
  - d) A benchmarking tool to support the use of the full range of marks across the percentage grades from 0-100%.
1. The University generic grade descriptors support these aims and can be used in Course/Module handbooks as they are, where appropriate, or contextualised into specific grade descriptors for a particular assessment, subject or cognate area. For example, modules that are performance, practice or design based may include more specific information and expectations on this requirement.
  2. Module/Course Leaders can also develop specific grade descriptors using alternative formats, which broadly link back to the University generic grade descriptors.
  3. Grade descriptors are a framework and will not provide mutually exclusive criteria for each grade band. The final grade will be a matter of academic judgement.
  4. The generic grade descriptors map to the requirements of the University undergraduate grade points (Academic Regulations) with additional detail provided for fail grades and the top grades to support academic judgement in these bands.
  5. Module handbooks contain specific assessment criteria for the module which are informed by the grade descriptors through Revalidation. This will be done annually from 2018 as courses are due to be revalidated by the University.
  6. Grade descriptors describing solely the pass/fail categories are required for module(s) which are ungraded at the pass level.
  7. Where an assessment task makes it inappropriate to use grade descriptors e.g., Multiply Choice Questions marking schemes or details of how the task will be graded should be provided in the module handbook.
  8. The descriptors were developed with reference to the SEEC level descriptors ([www.SEEC.org.uk](http://www.SEEC.org.uk)) and have been developed in line with the wider focus on consistency and transparency in marking by agencies such as the QAA and Office for Students.

## Generic Grade Descriptors at Level 3

80-100 An outstanding piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at an exceptionally high standard.

- Demonstrates exceptional understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Includes critical analysis of key concepts and principles.
- Shows awareness of current areas of debate and relevant wider context.
- Synthesises own research across a range of authoritative sources.
- Communicates succinctly and clearly using appropriate format and presentation.

70-79 An excellent piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a high standard.

- Demonstrates excellent understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Analyses key concepts and principles recognising their limitations.
- Undertakes own research using authoritative sources.
- Communicates effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

60-69 A good piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a good standard.

- Demonstrates good understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Applies key principles and concepts with clarity.
- Undertakes some additional research beyond given sources.
- Communicates effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

50-59 A sound piece of work: All assessment criteria have clearly been met.

- Demonstrates clear understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques with no significant weaknesses.
- Relates key principles and concepts to subject matter.
- Undertakes a range of research from given sources.
- Communicates adequately using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.

40-49 An adequate piece of work: All assessment criteria have just been met.

- Demonstrates adequate understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Describes accurately key principles and concepts.
- Uses appropriate information from given sources.
- Communicates adequately using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.
- Demonstrates technical proficiency in English or language of assessment to communicate effectively to the intended audience\*.

30-39 FAIL An inadequate piece of work: One or more relevant assessment criteria are not met.

- Demonstrates limited understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Identifies key principles and concepts with some weaknesses.
- Uses limited range of given sources.
- Communicates work poorly using given format with poor standard of presentation.

0-29 FAIL: A poor piece of work: Most of the relevant assessment criteria area not been met.

- Demonstrates a significant lack of understanding of defined knowledge base/techniques.
- Omits and/or misunderstands key concepts and principles.
- Uses inadequate information from given sources.
- Communicates work with insufficient clarity to convey understanding.

## Generic Grade Descriptors at Level 4

80-100: An outstanding piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at an exceptionally high standard.

- Critically analyses application of relevant knowledge/techniques.
- Shows exceptional knowledge, insight and understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses terminology and disciplinary knowledge confidently to communicate excellent level of understanding.
- Demonstrates critical awareness of wider context/reading and implications for subject/practice.
- Undertakes independent research drawing upon a range of authoritative sources. Communicates effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

70-79: An excellent piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a high standard.

- Applies relevant knowledge/techniques with clarity and confidence.
- Shows extensive knowledge, insight and analysis of key concepts and principles.
- Uses terminology and disciplinary knowledge effectively to communicate understanding.
- Undertakes independent research drawing upon a range of authoritative sources.
- Communicates effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

60-69: A good piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a good standard.

- Applies appropriate range of relevant knowledge/techniques.
- Demonstrates understanding and application of key concepts and principles.
- Uses a good range of terminology or disciplinary knowledge.
- Undertakes independent research drawing upon a range of authoritative sources.
- Communicates work effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

50-59: A sound piece of work: All assessment criteria have clearly been met.

- Applies limited range of relevant knowledge/techniques.
- Demonstrates understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses reasonable range of terminology or disciplinary knowledge.
- Undertakes research primarily from given sources from within the module.
- Communicates work using appropriate format and with some weaknesses of presentation.

40-49: An adequate piece of work: All assessment criteria have just been met.

- Applies relevant knowledge/techniques.
- Demonstrates descriptive understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses a limited amount of terminology or disciplinary knowledge.
- Uses relevant information sources from within the module to inform work.
- Communicates adequately using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.
- Demonstrates technical proficiency in English<sup>i</sup> or language of assessment to communicate effectively to the intended audience\*.

30-39: FAIL (a condoned pass may be permitted): An inadequate piece of work: One or more relevant assessment criteria are not met.

- Applies relevant knowledge/techniques and/or information with some weaknesses/omissions.
- Demonstrates limited understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses a limited range of relevant information from within the module.
- Communicates ineffectively with a poor standard of presentation.

0-29: FAIL A poor piece of work: Most of the relevant assessment criteria area not been met.

- Omits and/or misunderstands relevant knowledge/techniques.
- Demonstrates a significant lack of understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses inadequate information and research from within the module.
- Communicates with insufficient clarity of presentation to convey understanding.

## Generic Grade Descriptors at Level 5

80-100 An outstanding piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at an exceptionally high standard.

- Shows independent reflective thought in relation to task.
- Demonstrates exceptional critical analysis of theories, practices, and frameworks.
- Analyses concepts and principles that inform the work.
- Analyses wider context and implications for practice/subject.
- Synthesises research across a range of sources.
- Demonstrates exemplary communication excellent presentation of format used.

70-79 An excellent piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a high standard.

- Demonstrates critical and reflective analysis of theories, practices, and frameworks from the module.
- Applies a range of competing concepts and principles.
- Analyses wider context and implications for practice/subject.
- Provides evidence of substantial research across a range of sources.
- Communicates effectively with excellent presentation of format used.

60-69 A good piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a good standard.

- Analyses theories, practices and frameworks presented on the module.
- Applies key concepts and principles reflectively.
- Identifies important aspects of wider context and implications for practice/subject.
- Undertakes own research and evaluation of sources to inform enquiry.
- Communicates effectively using appropriate format and presentation.

50-59 A sound piece of work: All assessment criteria have clearly been met.

- Uses appropriately theories, practices and frameworks presented on the module.
- Demonstrates clear understanding and reflection on key concepts and principles.
- Demonstrates limited understanding of wider context and implications for practice/subject.
- Undertakes own research to inform task/enquiry.
- Communicates work using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.

40-49 An adequate piece of work: All assessment criteria have just been met.

- Describes accurately a range of theories, practices and frameworks presented on the module.
- Demonstrates adequate understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Undertakes additional research from sources provided within the module.
- Communicates work using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.
- Demonstrates technical proficiency in English or language of assessment to communicate effectively to the intended audience\*.

30-39 FAIL: An inadequate piece of work: One or more relevant assessment criteria are not met.

- Describes theories, practices and frameworks presented on the module with some weaknesses/omissions.
- Applies key concepts/principles with some weaknesses.
- Uses a minimal amount of relevant information provided within the module.
- Communicates using appropriate format with significant weaknesses in presentation.

0-29 FAIL: A poor piece of work: Most of the relevant assessment criteria area not been met.

- Describes theories, practices and frameworks presented on the module with significant inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings.
- Demonstrates omissions and very limited understanding of key concepts and principles.
- Uses insufficient/inadequate information sources.
- Communicates ineffectually with a very poor standard of presentation.

## Generic Grade Descriptors at Level 6

80-100 An outstanding piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at an exceptionally high standard.

- Demonstrates exceptional independent thought and reflection in relation to complex ideas and concepts.
- Provides creative analysis of techniques/knowledge.
- Critically analyses information sources, techniques, and approaches to analysis.
- Demonstrates extensive research across a range of sources.
- Communicates ideas and complexity with confidence, using appropriate format and excellent presentation.

70-79 An excellent piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a high standard.

- Takes a confident approach to critical analysis/reflection across a range of techniques/knowledge.
- Shows in-depth understanding of ideas and concepts.
- Demonstrates insightful/independent contextualisation and implications of theories/practices.
- Synthesises independent research across a range of authoritative sources.
- Communicates with clarity using appropriate format and excellent presentation.

60-69 A good piece of work: All assessment criteria have been met at a good standard.

- Demonstrates systematic understanding across a range of techniques/knowledge in specialised area.
- Demonstrates confident analysis/reflection on key concepts/frameworks.
- Explores relationship of theories/practices within the wider context.
- Provides additional independent research across a range of authoritative sources.
- Communicates clearly, using appropriate format and with sound presentation.

50-59 A sound piece of work: All assessment criteria have clearly been met.

- Demonstrates clear understanding of techniques/knowledge in specialised area.
- Demonstrates some independent synthesis and reflective analysis across key concepts/frameworks.
- Provides evidence of research across a range of resources provided within the module.
- Communicates using appropriate format with satisfactory presentation.

40-49 An adequate piece of work: All assessment criteria have just been met.

- Demonstrates descriptive understanding of techniques/knowledge.
- Provides limited evaluation of ideas and concepts.
- Undertakes minimal research within module content.
- Communicates work using appropriate format with some weaknesses of presentation.
- Demonstrates technical proficiency in English or language of assessment to communicate effectively to the intended audience\*.

30-39 FAIL: An inadequate piece of work: One or more relevant assessment criteria are not met.

- Applies techniques/knowledge with limited with some weaknesses/omissions.
- Demonstrates inadequate knowledge of key concepts and principles.
- Uses a minimal amount of relevant information from within the module.
- Communication is unclear with poor standard of presentation.

0-29 FAIL: A poor piece of work: Most of the relevant assessment criteria area not been met.

- Applies techniques/knowledge with significant weaknesses and omissions.
- Demonstrates major inaccuracies and/or misunderstandings flaws of key concepts and principles.
- Uses inadequate information sources from within the module.
- Communication is unclear with poor standard of presentation.

## Generic Grade Descriptors at Level 7

80-100 - An outstanding piece of work: all assessment criteria have been met at an exceptionally high standard.

- Displays exceptional initiative, creativity, sophistication, and originality
- Provides insightful analysis
- Demonstrates originality and rigour of argument
- Shows independent synthesis of ideas and understanding
- Demonstrates reflexivity and critical analysis to generate transformative solutions/responses
- Demonstrates substantial independent research
- Communicates complexity clearly and succinctly with excellent standard of presentation

70-79 - An excellent piece of work: all assessment criteria have been met at a high standard.

- Demonstrates sophisticated understanding across the field of study and related areas
- Draws on a range of techniques and information sources for independent analysis
- Demonstrates creativity and flair in task/enquiry
- Provides robust and insightful argument
- Provides a high quality critical and reflexive analysis
- Demonstrates substantial independent research
- Communicates ideas clearly and succinctly with good standard of presentation

60-69 - A good piece of work: all assessment criteria have been met at a good standard.

- Demonstrates breadth and/or depth of understanding across the field of study and related areas
- Synthesises knowledge to address task/enquiry
- Presents argument cogently and clearly
- Demonstrates extensive research and critical use of resources
- Communicates ideas clearly with a good standard of presentation

50-59 - A sound piece of work: all assessment criteria have clearly been met.

- Demonstrates understanding of appropriate range of concepts and theoretical approaches
- Provides an argument to frame response to enquiry/task
- Uses a range of relevant sources provided to undertake research
- Undertakes meaningful analysis/reflection in relation to the enquiry/task
- Communicates ideas using an appropriate format with few weaknesses in presentation
- Demonstrates technical proficiency in English or language of assessment to communicate effectively to the intended audience\*.

40-49 - FAIL: An inadequate piece of work: one or more relevant assessment criteria are not met.

- Provides clear limitations in the range of concepts/principles explored
- Demonstrates lack of clarity and depth of understanding in relation to the task/enquiry
- Uses a narrow range of sources to support task/enquiry
- Provides limited analysis/reflection
- Communication is unclear with significant weaknesses in presentation

39-0 - FAIL: A poor piece of work: Most of the relevant assessment criteria have not been met.

- Demonstrates poor understanding of key concepts and principles
- Shows significant weaknesses and omissions in completing the task
- Omits analysis/reflection
- Uses inadequate information sources
- Communication is unclear with significant weaknesses in presentation

*\* with appropriate recognition of Equality Act 2010 provisions*

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<sup>i</sup> The University Grade Descriptors were published in July 2018. Implementation is through the University Revalidation process. The descriptors were subject to minor amendments in May 2022 through the University Teaching Committee.