



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

## SECRETARIAT

### ACADEMIC POLICY SUMMARY SHEET

<b>NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:</b>	Marking and Grading Policy
<b>PURPOSE OF POLICY AND WHOM IT APPLIES TO:</b>	The policy sets out the University's approach to the marking and grading of taught undergraduate and postgraduate student work.
<b>RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:</b>	Academic Board approved the revised policy on 12 March 2008 and 16 December 2009 and 27 January 2016.
<b>LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:</b>	Director of EDEU
<b>PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:</b>	The policy was considered by members of Academic Board and the Education & Student Life Committees.
<b>POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:</b>	Academic Board on 27 January 2016
<b>DATE OF ORIGINAL IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	12 March 2008
<b>DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:</b>	The revised policy was circulated to relevant staff in February 2016 and is available on the Secretariat's portal site.
<b>PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW</b>	To be confirmed
<b>SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT:</b>	Officer to Education & Student Life Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	22 February 2016



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## **POLICY ON MARKING AND GRADING OF STUDENTS' ASSESSED WORK IN TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

### 1. Introduction.

- 1.1. All formal assessments which contribute to a student's progression through or attainment of an award of the University are formally marked or graded. The marks or grades awarded will reflect the traditions and practices of individual cognate subject areas and will be influenced by any relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. This document delineates University policy on the marking and grading of students' work, as a framework within which all assessors work.
- 1.2. This policy relates to taught programmes, that is, undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, and taught elements of taught doctoral awards.

### 2. General Principles.

- 2.1. All validated and accredited taught programmes of the University consist of units, which in turn have explicit learning outcomes. A function of formal assessment within a unit is to enable students to demonstrate that they have attained the learning outcomes of the unit.
- 2.2. Not all formal assessments will be related to all learning outcomes of the unit. Taken together, however, the set of assessments within a unit will enable students to demonstrate the attainment of all its learning outcomes.
- 2.3. Each formal assessment will have a set of assessment criteria, which describe what the student is expected to do in order to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.
- 2.4. All units will be marked<sup>1</sup> either as pass/fail and/or as a numerical value in the range 0% to 100%.
- 2.5. Attainment of learning outcomes is essentially a threshold statement, and where a unit is graded as pass/fail, "pass" indicates that the student has achieved the threshold.
- 2.6. Where an assessment is marked in the 0% to 100% range, a bare pass mark of 40% indicates threshold achievement of those of the unit's learning outcomes being assessed, measured against the assessment's criteria. A mark over 40% is an indication of the extent to which the threshold has been exceeded.
- 2.7. *Assessment feedback should normally be written and supplemented where appropriate with oral comments. In normal circumstances, feedback should be returned to students within 15 working days of the published submission deadline, i.e. students submitting work before the published deadline should not have an expectation that early submission will result in earlier return of work.*
- 2.8. *Where feedback will not be provided within 15 working days for good reason, e.g. in circumstances where a student has been granted an extension of time, illness of module co-ordinator etc., students should be informed of the timescale for feedback.*

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of Higher National Awards, numerical marks will be used, with table (appendix 1) relating grades of Pass, Merit, Distinction to ranges of marks.

3. Undergraduate Programmes. (Programmes at qualification levels C, I and H of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

- 3.1. Marking and grading within undergraduate level programmes are guided by the conventions of British higher education in respect of degree classifications:

**Undergraduate Honours Degree Classification:**

First Class Honours	70% or over	A
Upper Second Class Honours	60% or over	B
Lower Second Class Honours	50% or over	C
Third Class Honours	40% or over	D
Ordinary Degree	300 credits with normally 180 credits at Levels 2 and 3 with at least 60 credits at Level 3	

If the overall aggregate mark falls within 1% of the boundary of the next highest classification (e.g. 69.1% to 69.9%) the Board of Examiners shall automatically promote the candidate to the higher classification.

- 3.2. Where units are marked on a pass/fail basis, "pass" indicates the equivalent of at least 40%, and that the student has achieved the threshold of attaining the learning outcomes of the unit.

- 3.3. Where units are marked as a numerical value, the following guidance to the qualities which assessors should look for apply:

**90-100%:** a range of marks consistent with a first where the work is exceptional in all areas;

**80-89%:** a range of marks consistent with a first where the work is exceptional in most areas.

**70-79%:** a range of marks consistent with a first. Work which shows excellent content, organisation and presentation, reasoning and originality; evidence of independent reading and thinking and a clear and authoritative grasp of theoretical positions; ability to sustain an argument, to think analytically and/or critically and to synthesise material effectively.

**60-69%:** a range of marks consistent with an upper second. Well-organised and lucid coverage of the main points in an answer; intelligent interpretation and confident use of evidence, examples and references; clear evidence of critical judgement in selecting, ordering and analysing content; demonstrates some ability to synthesise material and to construct responses, which reveal insight and may offer some originality.

**50-59%:** a range of marks consistent with lower second; shows a grasp of the main issues and uses relevant materials in a generally business-like approach, restricted evidence of additional reading; possible unevenness in structure of answers and failure to understand the more subtle points: some critical analysis and a modest degree of insight should be present.

**40-49%:** a range of marks which is consistent with third class; demonstrates limited understanding with no enrichment of the basic course material presented in classes; superficial lines of argument and muddled presentation; little or no attempt to relate issues to a broader framework; lower end of the range equates to a minimum or threshold pass.

**35-39%:** achieves many of the learning outcomes required for a mark of 40% but falls short in one or more areas; not a pass grade but may be sufficient to merit progression to the next level.

**30-34%:** a fail; may achieve some learning outcomes but falls short in most areas; shows considerable lack of understanding of basic course material and little evidence of research.

**0-29%:** a fail; basic factual errors of considerable magnitude showing little understanding of basic course material; falls substantially short of the learning outcomes for compensation.

3.4. Further, whilst it is scarce for more than 5% of candidates to receive first class awards, there are years and cohorts where there may be considerably more than 5% or no such awards, and assessors are encouraged to use the full range of marks. In particular, individual assessments or units which satisfy the criteria for a first class mark should not automatically be given a mark of 69 or 70: there should be gradations of performance even within this category.

3.5. Boards of Examiners are required to monitor the quality and standards of students' performance in assessment, at both unit and award levels, depending on the boards' remits. Quantitative indicators which should be employed in such monitoring include the proportions of marks or classifications in various categories. In addition to the numbers of first class marks/degrees indicated above, it is anticipated that the majority of students will receive marks in the range 55% to 65%, with perhaps a concentration in the mid to high 50s.

4. Postgraduate Programmes. (Programmes at qualification levels M and D of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

4.1. Research elements of taught doctoral awards are assessed on a pass/refer basis. The assessment policy and criteria for such awards/elements are documented elsewhere.

4.2. The remainder of this section relates to taught postgraduate programmes and their units, and to taught units on taught doctoral awards.

4.3. Where units are marked on a pass/fail basis, "pass" indicates the equivalent of at least 50%, and that the student has achieved the threshold of attaining the learning outcomes of the unit.

4.4. Where units are marked as a numerical value, the following guidance to the qualities which assessors should look for apply:

Overall result		Marking Criteria
Distinction 70%+		Excellent work that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ display a full understanding of area of research and mastery of a significant body of data</li> <li>○ use full range of sources, used selectively to support argument</li> <li>○ provide a coherent and strong argument</li> <li>○ display originality in analysis and subtlety of interpretation</li> <li>○ be exceptionally well written and presented</li> <li>○ present the possibility of publication.</li> </ul>
	70-79%	High quality throughout with an excellent understanding of the subject.
	80-89%	Showing insight and potential for publication with some revisions.
	90%+	Exceptional insight and of publishable quality.

Good Pass 60-69	60-64%	The work will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ display effective use of main materials, going beyond the standard secondary sources</li> <li>○ present coherent and concise argument of complex concepts</li> <li>○ present independent and critical evaluation of a range of theories</li> <li>○ show some evidence of originality</li> <li>○ be written and presented to good academic standards.</li> </ul> Well developed argument and evaluation.
	65-69%	Approaching excellence in some areas.
Pass 50-59%	50-54%	The work will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ display a sound knowledge of principal materials relevant to area of study</li> <li>○ present a logical structure, though this may not be fully thought through</li> <li>○ display some capacity to critically reflect or analyse</li> <li>○ be unlikely to show evidence of originality</li> <li>○ be presented and written to adequate academic standards.</li> </ul> Generally accurate and sound understanding of area of study.
	55-59%	Approached good pass standard in several areas.
Fail <50	40-49%	Many of the basic materials will be present but the work will be lacking in other areas, such as, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ key information sources and content which will be limited</li> <li>○ unsophisticated use of key sources</li> <li>○ poorly structured and sustained argument displaying limited knowledge</li> <li>○ conceptual understanding, as exemplified in critical evaluation is poor.</li> <li>○ defects in presentation</li> </ul> Overall knowledge limited and poorly presented.
	30-39%	Very poor knowledge of subject and weak understanding of issues.
	<30%	Deeply flawed, containing fundamental mistakes.

**Postgraduate Diploma:** On the basis of prior knowledge and/or skills gained at first degree or through appropriate employment experience students should demonstrate advanced understanding of their field of study.

**Taught Masters Degree:** In addition to the requirements of a Postgraduate Diploma students should demonstrate an ability to work independently at an advanced level. A masters thesis will outline the nature of the problem and justify its choice for study; demonstrate an understanding of relevant literature; demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to their research and select and manage appropriate methodology; analyse data and problems; show an appreciation of theoretical/operational/managerial issues inherent in the research; synthesise the data and demonstrate conclusions; be well presented.

4.5. As and where permitted by University and individual award regulations, Boards of Examiners may award distinctions to students who pass a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters award. The criteria for the award of a distinction are defined in the Regulations.

A student shall be awarded a Masters degree with distinction if the overall average mark for the assessed elements that comprise the final Masters stage, the final 60 credits, of the programme is 70% or above.

A candidate who has been reassessed in any assessment of the programme shall not normally be regarded as eligible for the award of a distinction.

- 4.6. Boards of Examiners are required to monitor the quality and standards of students' performance in assessment, at both unit and award levels. Quantitative indicators which should be employed in such monitoring include the proportions of unit/award marks at fail, pass and (where applicable) distinction levels.

## APPENDIX 1

Assessment and Grading of Higher National Programmes

Grading of individual assessment items on Higher National awards

Percentage	Descriptor	Higher National Grade
0-39%	Unsatisfactory	Fail (or Refer where regulations permit)
40-49%	Satisfactory	Pass
50-59%	Threshold Merit Standard	Merit
60-69%	Good Merit Standard	Merit
70-100%	Excellent	Distinction