



Government and International Relations School of Social and Political Sciences

Assessment Practice

In assessing written work, academic staff looks for demonstrated effort, abilities and skills in the following areas. Note that individual units are likely to have additional and more specific requirements and criteria. These should be made clear to students by the coordinator in each unit.

1. Content
 - extent of reading
 - accuracy of knowledge
 - breadth and depth of knowledge
 - relevance of information
 - sufficiency of evidence and documentation
2. Understanding
 - understanding of problem or project
 - judgement of significance of material
 - awareness/understanding of different arguments in reading
 - recognition of implications of evidence
 - ability to think critically
 - grasp of relevant theory
 - understanding of ethics and values relevant to reading and subject matter
3. Independence
 - judgement and initiative in reading and research
 - originality in use and interpretation of evidence
 - development of argument
 - independence in use of concepts and language
4. Style
 - correctness of grammar and scholarly documentation
 - organisation and presentation of material
 - clarity of writing style
 - originality and creativity of writing style

Guide to interpretation of grades

This guide indicates broadly the qualitative judgements implied by the various grades which may be awarded. A more precise evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of individual essays will be provided in examiners' comments. Evaluation is made with due consideration of the different standards likely to be achieved by students in junior and senior units.

Below 50% (Fail)

Work not of an acceptable standard. Work may fail for any or all of the following reasons: unacceptable levels of paraphrasing; irrelevance of content; presentation, grammar or structure so sloppy it cannot be understood; submitted very late without extension.

50-54% (Low Pass)

Work of an acceptable standard. Written work contains evidence of minimal reading and some understanding of subject matter, offers descriptive summary of material relevant to the question, but may have a tendency to paraphrase; makes a reasonable attempt to organise material logically and comprehensibly and to provide scholarly documentation. There may be gaps in any or all of these areas.

55-59% (Medium Pass)

Work of a satisfactory standard. Written work meets basic requirements in terms of reading and research, and demonstrates a reasonable understanding of subject matter. Offers a synthesis of relevant material and shows a genuine effort to avoid paraphrasing, has a logical and comprehensible structure and acceptable documentation, and attempts to mount an argument, though there may be weaknesses in particular areas.

60-64% (High Pass)

Work has considerable merit, though Honours is not automatically recommended. Written work contains evidence of a broad and reasonably accurate command of the subject matter and some sense of its broader significance, offers synthesis and some evaluation of material, demonstrates an effort to go beyond the essential reading, contains clear focus on the principal issues, understanding of relevant arguments and diverse interpretations, and a coherent argument grounded in relevant evidence, though there may be some weaknesses of clarity or structure. Articulate, properly documented.

Note that roughly 45-50% of students in junior levels of study and 25-50% of students in senior level units of study will receive marks within the Pass range each semester.

65-69% (Low Credit)

Competent work, demonstrating potential to complete Honours work, though further development needed to do so successfully. Written work contains evidence of comprehensive reading, offers synthesis and critical evaluation of material on its own terms, takes a position in relation to various interpretations. In addition, it shows some extra spark of insight or analysis. Demonstrates understanding of broad historical significance, good selection of evidence, coherent and sustainable argument, some evidence of independent thought.

70-74% (High Credit)

Highly competent work, demonstrating clear capacity to complete Honours successfully. Evidence of extensive reading and initiative in research, sound grasp of subject matter and appreciation of key issues and context. Engages critically and creatively with the question, and attempts an analytical evaluation of material. Makes a good attempt to critique various interpretations, and offers a pointed and thoughtful contribution to an existing debate. Some evidence of ability to think theoretically as well as empirically, and to conceptualise and problematise issues. Well written and documented.

75-84% (Distinction)

Work of a superior standard. Written work demonstrates initiative in research and reading, complex understanding and original analysis of subject matter and its context, both empirical and theoretical; makes good attempt to 'get behind' the evidence and engage with its underlying assumptions, takes a critical, interrogative stance in relation to argument and interpretation, shows critical understanding of the principles and values underlying the unit. Properly documented; writing characterised by style, clarity, and some creativity.

85%+ (High Distinction)

Work of exceptional standard. Written work demonstrates initiative and ingenuity in research and reading, pointed and critical analysis of material, innovative interpretation of evidence,

makes an insightful contribution to debate, engages with values, assumptions and contested meanings contained within original evidence, develops abstract or theoretical arguments on the strength of detailed research and interpretation. Properly documented; writing characterised by creativity, style, and precision.