

Understanding the Marking System – A Guide for Students

These notes refer to the Code of Assessment which is used across the University so that the same rules apply for all students doing taught courses in all Colleges at all levels. The Code is in the Calendar which can be found on the Senate Office website at

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/codeofassessment/>.

Assessment - measuring what you've learned

Assessment is used to determine what you've learned – something the University needs to know so that it can monitor progress and make an appropriate award at the end of your programme. At the same time, feedback is essential to improving your learning and, for the assessment to make sense, you need to know what you are expected to learn. For this reason all courses have intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and it's important that you check these out in your course handbook.

Primary grades and secondary bands

The grades you get reflect your achievement of the ILOs. Schedule A of the Code of Assessment includes a description of each grade in exactly these terms. Programme teams may customise these descriptions so that they are more relevant to their own subjects, so check course documentation also. There are eight grades (A to H), representing everything from full attainment of the ILOs to no attainment at all. But over such a range you need more than eight points of reference to monitor progress so the primary grades have been divided into secondary bands, usually three bands to each grade. The middle band in each grade is the default with those above and below indicating a slightly stronger or weaker performance.

Marking in numbers

Some assessments look for answers which are either right or wrong, and the number of right answers may be added up to give a mark out of, say, 50 or 100. But, when an exam of this kind is being designed, ranges of these numerical marks will be mapped to the grades and bands (A1 to H) according to how the marks reflect achievement of the ILOs.

Combining your grades

To get the overall grade for your course or programme it's necessary to combine individual grades for exams and coursework. The fairest way of doing this is by averaging the various results while adjusting them to reflect their relative weights. To do this, the 'B2's, 'C1's, etc. are turned into scores. These scores are listed in Schedule A where you will see that H converts to 0 and A1 to 22. The Code of Assessment explains how the averages are calculated and rounded.

More about Grades and what you need to do to get them

What you have read so far should have helped you understand the principles on which the marking system is based. The ILOs tell you what you should learn on your course, and your grade tells you how successfully you've demonstrated having done so.

The following guidance should provide directions on how to demonstrate the achievement of ILOs, and the characteristics that tend to distinguish work at different grades. It is very important, however, that these directions are treated as secondary to application of the descriptors in Schedule A.

Grade A

An excellent performance is likely to be characterised by several of the following:

- questions are answered clearly, comprehensively and with appropriate focus
- excellent organisation and structure of answers
- reasoned arguments developing logical conclusions
- insight, imagination, originality and creativity
- integration of new information
- sound critical thinking
- independence of judgement
- explanation of relevant theory
- citation of relevant evidence
- evidence of wide, relevant reading
- application of learning to new situations and problem solving
- accuracy and absence of errors

Grade B

A very good performance is likely to be characterised by some, at least, of the following:

- questions are answered clearly and fully
- good organisation and structure of answers
- reasoned arguments developing logical conclusions
- very good understanding of the subject
- clear evidence of relevant reading or research
- explanation of relevant theory
- citation of relevant evidence
- inclusion of highly relevant ideas
- use of relevant examples
- application of learning to new situations and problem solving
- accuracy and absence of significant errors

although, distinguishing it from an excellent performance, it might be faulted on grounds of:

- demonstrating less insight, imagination, originality or creativity
- including a less comprehensive presentation, solution or answer
- integrating information less successfully
- exhibiting less critical thinking
- exhibiting less independence of thought

Grade C

A good performance is likely to be characterised by some, at least, of the following:

- attempts made to answer questions set
- ability to solve some of the problems set
- basic to good understanding of the subject
- evidence of some relevant reading or research
- inclusion of some relevant ideas
- inclusion of some relevant examples

although, distinguishing it from a very good performance, it might be faulted on grounds of:

- lacking sufficiently well structured argument
- not offering sufficient evidence to justify assertions

- not including sufficient relevant examples
- lacking insight, imagination, originality and creativity
- offering less in its presentation, solutions or answers
- containing some errors

Grade D

This grade is given the gloss 'satisfactory' in Schedule A of the Code of Assessment because it is the lowest grade normally associated with the attainment of an undergraduate award.

But if you are a postgraduate student you should be aware that on most programmes an average of at least Grade C in taught courses is required for progress to the dissertation at masters level, and you should check your course handbook for further details. A performance assessed as Grade D is likely to be characterised by some, at least, of the following:

- attempts made to answer questions set
- ability to solve some of the problems set
- modest evidence of understanding of the subject
- modest evidence of relevant reading or research
- inclusion of a few relevant ideas
- inclusion of a few relevant examples

and, distinguishing it from a good performance, it might:

- contain more errors of judgement, fact or application
- present arguments which are less well structured
- offer less evidence in support of assertions
- offer fewer relevant examples
- contain more errors

Grade E

A weak performance is likely to be characterised by some, at least, of the following:

- failure to answer the question set though an answer to a similar question may be offered
- partial solutions to problems set
- little evidence of understanding of the subject
- little evidence of relevant reading or research
- inclusion of very few relevant ideas
- absence of structured argument
- little evidence to justify assertions
- few relevant examples
- several significant errors

Grade F

A poor performance is likely to be characterised by some, at least, of the following:

- failure to answer the question set though an answer to a question within the same topic area may be offered
- very little evidence of understanding of the subject
- very little evidence of relevant reading or research
- inclusion of ideas relevant only in a wider consideration of the topic
- absence of structured argument
- very little evidence to justify assertions

- very few relevant examples
- many significant errors

Grade G

A very poor performance is likely to be characterised by some of the following:

- failure to answer the question set
- no evidence of understanding of the subject
- no evidence of relevant reading or research
- absence of relevant ideas
- absence of structured argument
- absence of evidence to justify assertions
- absence of relevant examples
- many significant errors

It is distinguished from a Grade 'H' performance by the fact that not all of these characteristics will be present.

Grade H

Absence of positive qualities.