

<b>Document Reference:</b>	Assessment Terminology, Criteria and Marking Schemes
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**Description:**

These guidelines will be of interest to both academic staff and students and are intended to act as a mechanism in which to disseminate practice about the Grimsby Institute Group (GIG) expectations regarding the use of assessment criteria and marking schemes. In using this code of practice other documents may need to be considered.

**Document Reference:**

QAAss. Assessment of Students  
QAAFbk. Giving Assessment Feedback to Students

For further advice on how the code of practice works, you should contact the Quality and Standards Department.

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Additional guidance can be obtained by visiting [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk) and referring to QAA Quality Code. Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning (2012)

**This document is available in alternative forms  
on request from the Quality and Standards Department**

## 1: Introduction

1.1 When writing, publicising or using assessment criteria and marking schemes the most important principle is clarity; lack of ambiguity should be avoided at all costs, the language used being clear to both students and academic staff

1.2 The terminology used in module booklets to outline what is required for an assessment can sometimes be confusing if not properly understood by all.

i) For example, the term 'assessment criteria' can potentially mean different things to different people

1.3 The GIG recognises that it is essential for both staff and students to clearly understand specific terms used and their associated meanings when planning for, or writing assessments; these terms are defined below:

- i. **Assessment method or task:** used to describe the method or type of assessment such as 'write an essay', 'produce a practical example', 'design a project', 'give a presentation'
- ii. **Assessment title:** used to frame a statement or a question that the student is expected to address
- iii. **Assessment brief:** used to define how the assessment task(s) will be judged and therefore includes a description, a list or further detail about what the learner is expected to do, in order to demonstrate that the module learning outcomes have been achieved. The assessment brief should make clear the requirement for student performance and be effectively aligned with the module learning outcomes and assessment method or task specified. Assessment briefs should preferably not use numbered lists to prevent potential confusion with learning outcomes.
- iv. **Module learning outcomes:** are specific statements that describe what a student must know, understand, or be able to do at the end of the module. Module tutors use module learning outcomes to inform the development of the assessment title and brief
- v. **Grading criteria/ marking schemes:** used to identify what is required for achievement of each of the grades being awarded (e.g., a pass, a third class, a 2:2, a 2:1 and a first class). Grading criteria or marking schemes provide general (and sometimes discipline specific) outcome descriptors and will differentiate between student performance (usually using percentages and a performance summary) at each classification level. Student work is then judged to fall at a given point within the range of descriptors.

1.4 Clearly published assessment tasks, titles, learning outcomes, briefs and marking schemes known and understood by students are essential 'tools' that make a significant contribution to a student's learning and academic development

- 1.5 Clear assessment tasks, titles, learning outcomes, briefs and marking schemes used by tutors, external examiners and other academic staff assist in assuring that marking is carried out fairly and consistently
- 1.6 The use of effective assessment briefs and marking schemes promote consistency and equity of judgments made against student performance and assist in the safeguarding of comparable academic standards
- 1.7 The fundamental precepts within these guidelines take into account:
  - i. Fairness and consistency
  - ii. Borderline marks or grades
  - iii. Use of different assessment practices
  - iv. Use of generic and discipline-specific marking schemes

## **2: Fairness and consistency**

- 2.1 Fairness within these guidelines relates to assessment practices that are transparent, equitable and promote vigilance against bias at all times
- 2.2 Consistency within these guidelines relates to assessment practices that are not marked by undue variance or irregularity
- 2.3 Fair and consistent assessment practices guard against assessment practices that may give a particular student(s) an unfair advantage or disadvantage over another
- 2.4 Consistency of assessment practice should be evident within a programme, across IGIG programmes and in relation to national standards
- 2.5 Assessment briefs and marking schemes should bear a relationship to the qualification descriptors of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), the level of the module and module learning outcomes. Details of the FHEQ can be found at:  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-A1.aspx>
- 2.6 Use of clear assessment briefs and marking schemes aid in safeguarding against conflicts of interests as a consequence of marker prejudice.
  - i) For example, in instances where non- anonymous assessment practices have been approved by an awarding body, the use of a clear assessment brief and marking scheme aids in the prevention of any tutor intentionally or inadvertently marking up students who normally do better or marking down those who have performed uncharacteristically well
- 2.7 Whilst assessment tasks, titles, learning outcomes, briefs and marking schemes must be clearly published, tutors should ensure that early on in their programme of study, students are well informed about and understand assessment terminology

2.8 Whilst a tutor should periodically reinforce the significance of assessment tasks, titles, learning outcomes, briefs and marking schemes, if a student fails to understand any element of the assessment, it is the student's responsibility to raise this lack of understanding with their tutor

2.9 Consistency of assessment practice should never be used to justify stagnation. Change or evolution of assessment practices are therefore deemed compatible with consistency.

i) For example, whilst certain types of assessments briefs related to performances, reflective logs of work based experiences, or design tasks may not require frequency of change, other briefs should be changed at each assessment cycle

### **3: Borderline marks or grades; definition and treatment**

3.1 The Institute defines a borderline mark/ grade when the mark lies within a 2% class boundary

3.2 All marking, whilst informed by relevant standards as defined by module learning outcomes, assessment briefs, grading criteria/ marking schemes etc, is reliant on an element of professional judgment. Thus, whilst careful consideration must be given in the judgment of any assessment, those that fall within a boundary of borderline for a single piece of assessment must be carefully scrutinised by the first marker

3.3 For example, in awarding 59% rather than 60%, markers should ask themselves-and be able to clearly explain to the student what more was needed to achieve an extra 1% (overall mark of 60%). If this cannot be determined then markers should re-consider if the result is actually a borderline case in the first instance

3.4 Where uncertainty exists first markers should specifically consult second markers and discuss their rationale for awarding a borderline mark

3.5 A final mark must always be awarded before further consultation with the external examiner and/or academic contact

3.6 In some circumstances, internal second marking and external moderation may be limited to sampling a representative number of scripts from a cohort of students. See insert CoP Assessment of Students QAAss v.1:

[http://www.grimsby.ac.uk/highereducation/documents/quality/CoP\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.grimsby.ac.uk/highereducation/documents/quality/CoP_Assessment.pdf)

Sampling for second marking must include an emphasis on borderline cases

### **4: Use of different assessment practices**

4.1 The GIG recognises that if variation in aspects of assessment practice occur, potential risk to the safeguarding of academic standards and the quality of the student experience may arise

4.2 An example of an assessment practice that may bring about variability is:

- i. Different grading criteria/ marking schemes used across the Institute from different partner awarding bodies

4.3 Whilst historically the GIG has promoted the use of awarding body specific grading criteria/ marking schemes, in an attempt to harmonise different schemes used, the GIG has referenced existing schemes in the development and design of one institutional model

4.4 The use of a GIG marking scheme is intended to enhance consistency and fairness of approach across awards and thus reduce risk of variability within the practice of assessment

### **5: Use of generic and discipline-specific marking schemes**

5.1 Published and accessible generic grading criteria or marking schemes are essential in helping staff and students identify the categorisation of different achievement or performance levels. Grading criteria or marking schemes cover the full range of marks available to the student (e.g. 0-19, 20-34, 35-39, 40-49, 50-59 and so on)

5.2 In the main staff have historically used one grading criteria/ marking scheme applicable to all levels of study. Through a process of enhancement, GIG generic grading criteria/ making schemes have become differentiated to take into account each level of study e.g. level 4, 5, 6 and so on. For:

Undergraduate	see appendix 1
Level 7 (Postgraduate)	see appendix 2

## Appendix 1 - Undergraduate General Marking Criteria

Level 3	Level 4 (Certificate)	Level 5 (Diploma)	Level 6 (Degree)
<p><b>90%-100%</b> Exceptional work with presentation of a very high standard. Demonstrates an extremely thorough knowledge and understanding through identification and description of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Evidence of wide and relevant reading, very effective use of appropriate source material and accurate referencing.</p>	<p><b>90%-100%</b> Exceptional work with presentation of a very high standard. There is coherence of ideas and demonstration of a thorough knowledge and understanding. Arguments are supported by wide reading with very effective use of source material and accurate referencing.</p>	<p><b>90%-100%</b> Exceptional work with presentation of the highest standard. The work contains coherent arguments and ideas. There is a detailed understanding of subject matter and critical analysis of issues/problems. Points are made clearly and concisely, always substantiated by appropriate use of source material. There is evidence of a sound ability to critically interrelate theories with examples from practice where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>90%-100%</b> Exceptional work. Presentation is logical, error-free and, where appropriate, creative. There is an in-depth understanding of issues/problems and excellent critical/deep engagement with the material and concepts involved. Very skilful interpretation of data. Arguments, ideas and, where appropriate, solutions are presented coherently and fully underpinned by thorough research and reading.</p>
<p><b>80%-89%</b> Outstanding work with presentation of a very high standard. Demonstrates a very good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Evidence of significant independent reading and effective use of source material, accurately referenced.</p>	<p><b>80%-89%</b> Outstanding work with presentation of a very high standard. There is coherence of ideas and demonstration of a thorough knowledge and understanding. Arguments are supported by wide reading with effective use of source material and accurate referencing.</p>	<p><b>80%-89%</b> Outstanding work with presentation of a very high standard. There is comprehensive understanding of key concepts and knowledge and evidence of critical analysis and insight. Accurate interpretation of data with arguments, ideas and solutions presented effectively and based on strong research and reading.</p>	<p><b>80%-89%</b> Outstanding work with presentation of a very high standard. There is comprehensive understanding of key concepts and knowledge and clear evidence of critical analysis and insight. Accurate interpretation of data with arguments, ideas and solutions presented effectively and based on strong research and reading.</p>
<p><b>70%-79%</b> Extremely good work with presentation of a high standard. Demonstrates strong knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Evidence of independent reading and good use of source material, accurately referenced.</p>	<p><b>70%-79%</b> Extremely good work with presentation of a high standard. There is coherence of ideas and demonstration of thorough knowledge and understanding. Arguments are supported by wide reading with appropriate use of source material and accurate referencing.</p>	<p><b>70%-79%</b> Extremely good work with presentation of a high standard. Evidence of strong knowledge and understanding together with some critical analysis and insight. Source material is used effectively to support arguments, ideas and solutions.</p>	<p><b>70%-79%</b> Extremely good work with presentation of a high standard. Demonstrates an excellent knowledge base with a clear understanding of the issues and application to practice where appropriate. There is some effective critical and analytical application of relevant research and reading.</p>
<p><b>60%-69%</b> The work is well presented. There is evidence of sound knowledge and understanding through identification of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Some evidence of independent reading and use of source material accurately referenced.</p>	<p><b>60%-69%</b> The work is well presented and coherently structured. There is evidence of a sound knowledge and understanding of the issues with theory linked to practice where appropriate. Most material used has been referenced/acknowledged.</p>	<p><b>60%-69%</b> Very good presentation. Sound knowledge and understanding with an emerging ability to critically engage with and apply the concepts involved linking them to practice where appropriate. Good use of source material which supports most points clearly. Content is wholly relevant and is coherently structured.</p>	<p><b>60%-69%</b> The work is very good, logically structured and presented to a high standard. Demonstrates a strong knowledge base with a clear understanding of the issues and application to practice where appropriate. There is some critical and analytical application of relevant research.</p>

Level 3	Level 4 (Certificate)	Level 5 (Diploma)	Level 6 (Degree)
<p><b>50%-59%</b> Presentation acceptable but with some errors. Demonstrates adequate knowledge and understanding through the identification and use of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Some use of source material.</p>	<p><b>50%-59%</b> Presentation is acceptable but with some errors. There is knowledge and understanding of issues under discussion and some evidence of the application of knowledge and ideas where appropriate. Some use of relevant source material.</p>	<p><b>50%-59%</b> Presentation is of a good standard but some shortcomings. Evidence of a sound knowledge base but limited critical and practical application of concepts and ideas. Content is largely relevant although points may not always be clear and structure may lack coherence. Contains some critical reflection and some use of source material to illustrate points.</p>	<p><b>50%-59%</b> The work is clearly presented and logically structured. It shows evidence of a sound understanding of the topic and addresses major issues. The work contains some discussion and interpretation of relevant perspectives although further development of the arguments presented would be beneficial. There are examples of critical reflection and evidence of application of theory to practice.</p>
<p><b>40%-49%</b> Presentation is acceptable but attention is needed to the structure. There is limited though sufficient evidence of knowledge and understanding through the identification and use of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Some use of relevant source material.</p>	<p><b>40%-49%</b> Presentation is acceptable but attention to structure and style is required. The content is relevant but largely descriptive. There is evidence of a reasonable level of knowledge and understanding but there is limited use of source material to support the arguments, proposals or solutions. Some links are made to practice where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>40%-49%</b> Adequate presentation. The work is descriptive and/or lacks critical analysis where required but is relevant with limited though sufficient evidence of knowledge and understanding. There is some evidence of reading although arguments/ proposals/solutions often lack coherence and may be unsubstantiated by relevant source material or partially flawed. Links to practice are made where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>40%-49%</b> Adequate presentation. The work displays basic knowledge and understanding of the topic but is largely descriptive. There is an attempt to bring together different ideas and concepts although this would have been strengthened by the inclusion of further key issues. The structure of the work requires attention to its coherence and logical development of content. The link between theory and practice, where appropriate, is somewhat tenuous and its development would enhance the work considerably.</p>
<p><b>30%-39% – Fail</b> The work is poorly structured and presented. Demonstrates inadequate and flawed knowledge and understanding of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Some material is irrelevant. Insufficient use of supporting material.</p>	<p><b>30%-39% – Fail</b> The work is poorly structured and presented. Some material may be irrelevant. Content is based largely on taught elements with very little evidence of reading around the topic and little or no reference to practice where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>30%-39% – Fail</b> Poorly structured, incoherent and wholly descriptive work. Evidence of a weak knowledge base with some key aspects not addressed and use of irrelevant material. Flawed use of techniques. Limited evidence of appropriate reading and no evidence of critical thought. Little reference to practice where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>30%-39% – Fail</b> The work is poorly presented and contains numerous errors, inconsistencies and omissions with limited use of source material. The work displays a weak knowledge base and a lack of sufficient understanding of the topic. There is limited evidence of the application of theory to practice where appropriate. It contains many unsupported statements with limited attempts to bring issues together and lacks critical analysis and reflection.</p>

Level 3	Level 4 (Certificate)	Level 5 (Diploma)	Level 6 (Degree)
<p><b>20-29% – Fail</b> The work is very poorly structured and presented. It demonstrates seriously inadequate and flawed knowledge and understanding of key concepts and principles relevant to the topic area. Much material is irrelevant. Very little use of supporting material. To obtain a mark of 20% the work must show evidence of a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and with the subject matter.</p>	<p><b>20-29% – Fail</b> The work is very poorly structured and presented. Much material is irrelevant. Content is based almost entirely on taught elements with very little evidence of any purposeful reading around the topic. No effective reference to practice where appropriate. To obtain a mark of 20% the work must show evidence of a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and with the subject matter.</p>	<p><b>20-29% – Fail</b> Very poorly structured, incoherent and wholly descriptive work. Evidence of a very weak knowledge base with many key omissions and much material irrelevant. Use of inappropriate or incorrect techniques. Very little evidence of appropriate reading and no evidence of critical thought. No links to practice where appropriate. To obtain a mark of 20% the work must show evidence of a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and with the subject matter.</p>	<p><b>20-29% – Fail</b> The work is very poorly presented and contains numerous serious errors, inconsistencies and omissions with little use of source material. The work displays a very weak knowledge base and a lack of sufficient understanding of the topic. There is very little evidence of the application of theory to practice where appropriate. It contains many unsupported statements with very little attempt to bring issues together and there is a complete lack of critical analysis and reflection. To obtain a mark of 20% the work must show evidence of a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and with the subject matter.</p>
<p><b>0-19 % - Fail</b> The work is extremely poorly structured and presented. It demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of key concepts and principles. Much material is irrelevant. No real use of supporting material. Not a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and/or subject matter.</p>	<p><b>0-19 % - Fail</b> The work is extremely poorly structured and presented. It demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of key concepts and principles. Much material is irrelevant. No effective use of supporting material. No reference to practice where appropriate. Not a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and/or subject matter.</p>	<p><b>0-19 % - Fail</b> The work is extremely poorly structured and presented. It demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of key concepts and principles. Much material is irrelevant, incorrect or omitted. No evidence of critical thought. No effective use of supporting material. No links to practice where appropriate. Not a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and/or subject matter.</p>	<p><b>0-19 % - Fail</b> The work is extremely poorly structured and presented. It demonstrates no real knowledge or understanding of key concepts and principles. Much material is irrelevant, incorrect, inconsistent or omitted. No evidence of critical analysis and reflection. No effective use of supporting material. No application of theory to practice where appropriate. Not a genuine attempt to engage with the assessment requirements and/or subject matter.</p>



## Appendix 2 - Level 7 (Postgraduate) Generic Marking Criteria

Band	Generic Criteria
<b>90-100%</b>	An excellent critical and complete demonstration of understanding in all key areas of knowledge relevant to the work and demonstrating an innovative and creative approach. Evidence throughout the work of a sustained ability to synthesise and interpret complex concepts, to make inferences and to provide an original and/or compelling argument and discussion. Excellent structure and immaculate presentation, with cogent use of academic language and grounded in a pertinent and substantial selection of source materials. Excellent use of appropriate analytical and research methods and addresses ethical considerations in an informed and perceptive manner. Exceptional ability to link and critically analyse theory and practice where appropriate.
<b>80-89%</b>	An excellent, critical and systematic demonstration of understanding in all key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Evidence throughout of the ability to synthesise and interpret complex concepts to provide a compelling argument and discussion. Very good structure and presentation, with confident use of academic language and grounded in a relevant and extensive selection of source materials. Excellent use of appropriate analytical and research methods and fully addresses ethical considerations. Excellent ability to link and critically analyse theory and practice where appropriate.
<b>70-79%</b>	An excellent, critical and organised demonstration of understanding in all key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Evidence throughout of the ability to synthesise and interpret diverse concepts to provide a sound argument and discussion. Good structure and presentation, with fluent use of academic language and grounded in an appropriate and comprehensive selection of source materials. Very effective use of appropriate analytical and research methods and consideration of ethical implications. Very good ability to link and critically analyse theory and practice where appropriate.
<b>60-69%</b>	A proficient, clearly stated and analytical demonstration of understanding in all key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Evidence of the ability to integrate and analyse diverse concepts in a rational and logical argument and discussion. Well structured and clearly presented work, with fluent use of academic language and utilising a relevant and extensive range of source materials. Effective use of appropriate analytical and research methods and consideration of ethical issues. Good ability to link and critically analyse theory and practice where appropriate.
<b>50-59%</b>	An acceptable and substantiated demonstration of understanding in all key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Evidence of the ability to integrate and analyse diverse concepts in a reasoned and valid argument and discussion. Adequately structured and presented work, with clear use of academic language and reference to a sufficient range of relevant source materials. Adequate use of appropriate analytical and research methods and does address ethical considerations. Effective linking of theory and practice where appropriate.
<b>40-49%</b>	A limited, insufficient and/or inaccurate understanding in key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Insufficient evidence of ability to integrate and analyse concepts to provide a valid discussion. Unacceptably structured and presented work, with insufficient use of academic language and conventions. A limited range of source materials is used. Limited or ineffective use of analytical and research methods and limited coverage of ethical considerations. Inadequate linking of theory and practice where applicable.
<b>30-39%</b>	A descriptive and/or narrative account, with little critical and/or flawed understanding of key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Insufficient evidence of ability to discuss fundamental concepts. Unclear and and/or unevidenced argument and discussion. Poorly structured and presented work, with little use of academic language and conventions. A narrow and/or inappropriate range of source materials and analytical and research methods is used. Failure to identify ethical considerations and to link theory and practice where applicable.

Band	Generic Criteria
<b>20-29%</b>	A weakly descriptive and/or narrative account, with no analytical content and/or significant inaccuracies in understanding of key areas of knowledge relevant to the work. Little or no evidence of research and the ability to discuss fundamental concepts. No awareness of ethical issues. Unclear and unsourced arguments and discussion. Flawed structure and presentation, with negligible attention to academic language or conventions. Some or all source materials are unreferenced and/or irrelevant. Failure to link theory and practice where applicable. To obtain a mark of 20% the work must show evidence of a genuine attempt to demonstrate some knowledge of the subject.
<b>0-19%</b>	The work is almost entirely derivative and therefore lacks analysis or reflection, and shows little or no knowledge or understanding of key areas relevant to the work. No evidence of research and the ability to discuss fundamental concepts. The presentation and referencing does not conform to the standards required.