MA in History of Art and associated pathway degrees

The written explanation of assessment policies and procedures which follows has been prepared with the aim of informing students about these matters as clearly and effectively as possible. Students should read this document alongside the Department’s Guide for MA Students and should feel free to consult the Graduate Chair if they have any queries.

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

MA students take one core Research Skills and Methods course in the Autumn and Spring Terms which is worth 10 credits, and assessed by way of a 2,000-word dissertation synopsis. Students also take four options, each of which is worth 20 credits and assessed by a 3,500-word essay (with the exception of Theory and Historiography, for which students submit two pieces of work: a 1,000 word summary of their assessed presentation, and a 2,500 word book critique). Assessed work for Autumn Term modules should be submitted in hard copy to the Postgraduate Administrator by noon on the Wednesday of Week 1 of the Spring Term. Assessed work for Spring Term modules should be submitted by noon on the Wednesday of Week 1 of the Summer Term. The dissertation synopsis should be submitted to the Postgraduate Administrator by noon on the Wednesday of Week 3 of the Summer Term.

Together, these five pieces of assessed work account for 50% of the final degree mark, and in order to pass this component of the degree and proceed to the dissertation, students must achieve an overall rounded credit-weighted average mark of 50 or more across these five pieces of work. On this basis, a marginal fail mark (40-49) on assessed work for an option module may be carried (i.e. compensated for in other assessed work), provided that the credit-weighted average mark across the five pieces is 50 or more, the candidate has no marks lower than 40, and the candidate has failed no more than 40 credits. All essays which fall below 40 must be revised, regardless of the overall average mark. A marginal fail mark (40-49) on the dissertation synopsis cannot be compensated, however; this component must be passed before a candidate may proceed to the dissertation.

The Dissertation of 15,000 words, due at midday on the Wednesday of the 50th week of registration for full-time students (in the second year of the course for part-time students), is worth 50% of the final assessment. This will be required to be submitted both in hard copy and electronically.

Deadlines are published in the Guide for MA Students and any alterations are publicized by email and by posting on the departmental notice boards.
2. MARKING PROCEDURES

Anonymity: All assessed work is anonymous during the marking process. Individuals are identified only by their University examination number, which is not available to markers (although first markers who have supervised the essay may know the student’s identity, and the Graduate Chair may have to break the code in certain circumstances). All assessed work is double marked, and the two internal markers then agree on the final mark. Marks are recorded in the University’s database system and in the student’s file.

Adjudication of marks: Where there is any disagreement that cannot be resolved by the two internal markers, the Graduate Chair will appoint an internal third marker to resolve the mark. All three marks, with their reports, will be reviewed by the external examiner.

The External Examiner: The University currently appoints one external examiner to the Board of Examiners in History of Art for the taught MA and pathway degrees. The external examiner’s role is primarily to monitor the assessment process (i.e. s/he reviews and comments upon the internal marking, rather than acting as a third marker).

Release of Marks:

Assessed work for option modules: Agreed marks and the internal examiners’ reports are released in Week 6 of the Spring and Summer Terms, after the internal marking has been completed, and the marks are subsequently reviewed by the External Examiner. These marks are provisional until confirmed by the MA Progression Board in June.

Dissertation synopses: Agreed marks and the internal examiners’ reports are released in Week 6 of the Summer Term, after the internal marking has been completed, and the marks are subsequently reviewed by the External Examiner. These marks are provisional until confirmed by the MA Progression Board in June.

Dissertations: Dissertation marks and examiners’ reports, together with the final results of the degree, are available shortly after the Final Examinations Board in November.

Extensions: Requests for extensions on assessed work may be made on grounds of special medical or personal circumstances only. Students with dyslexia or similar conditions are not normally allowed extra time for submission. Written requests must be submitted in good time, to the Postgraduate Administrator, with relevant supporting documentary evidence, in accordance with the university’s Mitigating Circumstances policy (https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/mitigation/).

The Board of Examiners: The Board of Examiners is made up of all academic staff in the Department of History of Art, together with the external examiner. The Board is responsible for the classification of degrees awarded to MA candidates. The Board is also responsible for the review of changes to policy in examination matters. The principal officer of the Board is the Graduate Chair, whose responsibility it is to administer the examination procedures (in consultation with the Head of Department when appropriate), to liaise with the external examiner and to instigate new policy in this area of the Department’s work.

Classification of Degrees: Together, the dissertation synopsis and assessed work for the four option modules are worth 50% of the final degree mark. To determine this mark, the dissertation synopsis and assessed work for the four option modules are credited-weighted, with the dissertation synopsis worth 10 credits, and assessed work for each option module worth 20 credits. The Dissertation
accounts for the remaining 50% of the final mark.

To pass the MA, the student needs an overall credit-weighted average mark of 50 or more across the dissertation synopsis and assessed work for the four option modules, and a mark of 50 or more in the Dissertation. To achieve a merit in the MA, candidates must achieve, at the first attempt, a rounded credit-weighted average of 60 or more across all assessed work, a mark of 60 or more in the dissertation, and have no failed modules. To achieve a distinction in the MA, candidates must achieve, at the first attempt, a rounded credit-weighted average of 70 or more across all assessed work, a mark of 70 or more in the dissertation, and have no failed modules.

Once essay and dissertation synopsis marking has been completed in the Summer Term, candidates whose weighted average mark falls below 50 will normally be required, where the referral rules permit, to revise and pass the failed pieces of work before they can proceed to the dissertation. Therefore, all candidates under consideration at the Final MA Examination Board in November should have already passed this component of the degree.

Between the assessed work for the four option modules and the dissertation synopsis, only two pieces of work can be referred. The dissertation may also be referred if the mark falls between 40 and 49 (a ‘marginal fail’), but may not achieve a mark higher than 50 on resubmission. If the dissertation mark falls below 40, there will be no opportunity for reassessment.

If the application of a penalty causes a mark to drop below 50, the work cannot be referred to earn a pass mark. Because of these stipulations, if a candidate fails to achieve sufficiently high marks on the essays, dissertation synopsis and/or additionally fails to achieve a mark of 50 or more on the dissertation, and/or earn sufficiently high penalties, s/he may automatically fail the degree without possibility of referral.

Markscale:

Taught MA essays, dissertation synopses, and dissertations are marked on the university's postgraduate mark scale, 0-100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Fail at MA level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Satisfactory at MA level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Good at MA level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-100</td>
<td>Distinguished at MA level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key benchmarks:

50   Average mark required across the four assessed essays and dissertation synopsis for a pass. Minimum mark required in dissertation to pass. Maximum mark allowable for a referred dissertation.

60   Average mark required across all assessed work for a merit. Minimum mark required in dissertation to receive a merit.

70   Average mark required across all assessed work for a distinction. Minimum mark required in dissertation to receive a distinction.

Grade descriptors:

Below 30 Insufficient engagement with the subject to suggest any real understanding of work at post-graduate level. No attention paid to primary sources and a lack of critical understanding of secondary material. May also be poorly written or structured, inadequate in its use of scholarly apparatus, and/or otherwise inadequate or erroneous. If any work earns a mark in this range, the degree is immediately failed outright.
30-39 Covers some aspects of topic with understanding and knowledge, such as could be derived from seminars and directed reading, but lacks essential information and/or references to essential texts. Lacking in accuracy, analysis or criticism. Largely descriptive and not always correct. Writing, scholarly presentation, and structure may be inadequate. Insufficient coverage of material, although demonstrating sufficient engagement with the subject to suggest that it is capable of improvement. Essays and dissertation synopses marked in this range must be revised; dissertations marked in this range will be failed outright and no degree will be awarded.

40-49 Covers topic with understanding and knowledge, such as could be derived from seminars and directed reading. There may be a lack of balance and/or accuracy in using primary and secondary sources. Writing, scholarly presentation, and structure may be inadequate. It may also lack rigour and contain errors, be descriptive at the expense of analysis, or be uncritical of its sources and inadequately referenced. Essays in this range may be compensated by higher marks in other work; dissertations and dissertation synopses marked in this range must be revised and then earn a pass mark (50).

50-59 Covers topic, showing knowledge and understanding of the chosen subject (including the use of primary material) within a structured framework and some analytical and critical awareness. Competently written and structured. Referenced in accordance with internationally referenced conventions, although some errors may be present. Work in the higher end of this range will show a more competent coverage and a more balanced analytical and critical framework.

60-68 Well-argued and presented coverage of the topic, with good understanding and critique of issues and sources, based on wide reading. Well-written, and argument clearly expressed. Some signs of creative thought and originality but either not sustained excellence in this aspect or marred by other defects, such as the misuse of language, weak structure, or inaccurate referencing.

69 The award of this mark signals that the examiner has noted evidence of creativity and originality, showing potential for doctoral research, and would not oppose the award of a distinction if the other examiners thought more highly of the same work.

70-79 Excellent work. Displays detailed grasp of material within a clear and critical framework, and with originality in some aspects of argumentation and/or genuine engagement with scholarship, showing potential for doctoral research. Generally confident and error-free use of language and referencing systems.

80-89 Exceptional work. Confident, detailed and critical analyses of topic with an original argument and/or commanding engagement with primary and secondary sources, demonstrating a clear capacity for doctoral research. Mastery of subject, with sustained control of language in terms both of syntax and language. Errors in use of language and referencing should be minimal.

90-100 Outstanding work, characterised by exceptional powers of analysis and exposition, depth and breadth of knowledge and originality in argument; publication-standard presentation and apparatus. Work at this level is original and publishable in its own right, even before the candidate moves on to doctoral work.
3. PENALTIES

Work that is not submitted on time, or that is inadequate in certain ways may be subject to penalties as follows:

Late submission: A university-wide policy on late submission of assessed work applies to all taught programmes at York. All work submitted late, without valid mitigating circumstances, will have 10 marks deducted for each day (or part of each day) that the work is late, up to a total of five days, including weekends and bank holidays, e.g. if work is awarded a mark of 57, and the work is up to one day late, the final mark is 47. After five days, the work is marked at zero.

Any such penalty will be determined by the Graduate Chair in consultation with the Graduate Committee and will be communicated soon after the submission date to the candidate, who will be given a fortnight to register dissent. For students with low pass marks, such a penalty could well result in failure of the degree. Penalties will be reviewed (bearing in mind any representations from the candidate) and either ratified or amended at the MA Progression Board (for assessed essays and dissertation synopses) or Final Examinations Board (for dissertations).

Failure to meet word count: The title pages for all History of Art assessed work require a note of word length. Students must report the word count accurately and keep within the stipulated word limits.

Dissertations that fail to meet the word count may be marked down or referred at the discretion of the examiners.

For assessed work which is overlength or underlength by up to 20%, the examiners may deduct up to 3 marks. For work which is more than 20% overlength or underlength, the examiners may deduct up to 10 marks. Examiners should state clearly in commenting on the scripts that this is what they have done and provide their rationale for the degree of penalty imposed.

NB Different word counts and procedures may apply for modules taken in other departments or centres.

Poor presentation: For both essays and dissertations, the examiners may at their own discretion reduce the mark for work that shows poor use of language, poor presentation, poor referencing and/or inadequate proof-reading. Examiners may at their discretion take a more lenient view where English is not the candidate’s first language.

Academic misconduct: A full description of what constitutes academic misconduct can be found in the Guide to MA Students, and students are also warned about plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct in lectures during the course and through the university’s online Academic Integrity Tutorial. Cases of suspected plagiarism or other academic misconduct will be dealt with according to the procedures stipulated by the University (Regulation 5.7: and the Guide to Academic Misconduct: Policies, Guidelines and Procedures for all programmes of study: http://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/supportservices/academicregistry/registryservices/Academic%20Misconduct%20guide%20FINAL%20June%202011.pdf).

4. PROGRESSION

In order to progress to the dissertation, students must achieve an overall rounded credit-weighted average mark of 50 or more across the dissertation synopsis and assessed work for the four option
modules. Between the dissertation synopsis and assessed work for the four option modules, only two pieces of work can be referred. If a student’s four essays and dissertation synopsis all receive marks below 50, s/he will have failed the degree. If at least three of these pieces of work have received a mark of 50 or more but the credit-weighted average mark falls below 50, s/he will normally be expected to revise one or two failed pieces of work in order to achieve the 50 average before proceeding to the dissertation.

If at any point a student's overall average falls below 40, s/he may be advised not to continue.

5. APPEALS

Students are referred to Regulation 6.7, which sets out the University’s appeals procedure for graduate students (see: https://www.york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/).

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