



## Department of Philosophy

### Marking Criteria, Mark Scale, and Marking Procedures

#### 7.1 Marking Criteria

The information that follows gives the criteria used to mark essays and essay-style exam answers in the Department of Philosophy.

Your assessed work is evaluated along four dimensions: **understanding**, **argument**, **organisation** and **writing**. The criteria for classes are given in the table and explained below. For each class, work may meet the criteria minimally (low), well (mid) or very well (high). The dimensions can be differently weighted depending on the question answered.

Class	Mark scale and range	Criteria
High exceptional 1 <sup>st</sup> Mid exceptional 1 <sup>st</sup> Low exceptional 1 <sup>st</sup>	100 95 90	Exceptional work that demonstrates original thought and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates an exceptionally sophisticated understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li><li>• provides an exceptionally sophisticated answer to the question that contains detailed argument [Argument]</li><li>• contains material that is exceptionally well selected and organized [Organisation]</li><li>• is exceptionally well written [Writing]</li></ul>
High 1 <sup>st</sup> Mid 1 <sup>st</sup> Low 1 <sup>st</sup>	85 80 75	Excellent work that demonstrates independent thought and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates an excellent understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li><li>• provides an excellent answer to the question that contains detailed argument [Argument]</li><li>• contains material that is very well selected and organized [Organisation]</li><li>• is very well written [Writing]</li></ul>
High 2:1 Mid 2:1	68 65	Good work that:

Low 2:1	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li> <li>provides a good answer to the question that contains detailed argument [Argument]</li> <li>contains material that is well selected and organized [Organisation]</li> <li>is well written [Writing]</li> </ul>
High 2:2 Mid 2:2 Low 2:2	58 55 52	<p>Satisfactory work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates some understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li> <li>goes some way towards answering the question and contains some argument [Argument]</li> <li>contains material that is relevant and is reasonably well organised [Organisation]</li> <li>is written in a satisfactory manner [Writing]</li> </ul>
High 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mid 3 <sup>rd</sup> Low 3 <sup>rd</sup>	48 45 42	<p>Work that is adequate, but below expectation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates some understanding of some of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li> <li>goes some way towards answering the question but contains little or no argument [Argument]</li> <li>contains some material that is relevant and is adequately organized [Organisation]</li> <li>is written in a minimally competent manner [Writing]</li> </ul>
High Fail Mid Fail Low Fail Zero	38 25 12 0	<p>Inadequate work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates little or no understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments [Understanding]</li> <li>makes little or no attempt to answer the question and contains little or no argument [Argument]</li> <li>contains material that is badly selected and badly organized [Organisation]</li> <li>is badly written [Writing]</li> </ul>

## Explanation of Marking Criteria

### Understanding

‘Relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments’ are those encountered in the module for which the work is produced. How well you demonstrate your understanding will depend on how well you describe and explain these.

The quality of your description and explanation of these can depend on, for example:

- how well you interpret phrases, passages and texts
- your use of philosophical terminology
- the comparisons and contrasts you make

## Argument

Under 'argument' we are looking for (a) whether you answer the question and (b) the quality of your argument for your answer.

The quality of your argument for your answer can depend on, for example,

- how detailed your argument is.
- whether you develop a sustained line of argument.
- how well you formulate and reply to objections to your answer.

## Organisation

Under 'organisation' we are looking for (a) the relevance of the material you include and (b) the way you structure your essay.

Material is relevant to the extent that it contributes to your argument for your answer.

The quality of your work's structure can depend on, for example:

- whether you introduce and conclude your work appropriately
- whether material is arranged in a way that makes sense, given your argument

## Writing

The quality of your writing can depend on:

- whether it is grammatical and well spelled and punctuated (unless you have a student support plan from Disability Services that recommends that errors in spelling and grammar should be ignored)
- whether you use sentences and paragraphs appropriately
- whether you write clearly and simply
- whether you choose appropriate words and expressions

## Notes on 'independence' and 'originality'

Independent thought is necessary but not sufficient for first class marks.

- Independent thought is taking what you have been taught and developing it in the service of your own argument.

Original thought is necessary but not sufficient for exceptional first class marks.

- Original thought is 'moving the discipline on': for example, a new argument, objection or response.

## Assessed essays and unseen 'closed' exams'

The marking criteria are the same for assessed essays and essays written under exam conditions. Marking criteria for other assessment tasks might differ, but if so you will be informed of this. Assessed essays are longer than essays written under exam conditions, and candidates have more time to prepare them. Assessed essays therefore generally require candidates to demonstrate greater depth and breadth of understanding, should contain more detailed argument, be better organised, and be better written than essays written under exam conditions.

## 7.2 Explanation of the mark scale

### Marks for essay-based assessments

In order to make our marking clear and transparent, for essay-based assessments (assessed essays and essays written under exam conditions) the Philosophy Department employs 'stepped' or 'fixed point' marking.

For each class band, your mark reflects whether you meet the criteria for that band minimally (low), well (mid) or very well (high). For work in the third, lower second, and upper second classes, the marks available are \_2 (low), \_5 (mid), and \_8 (high). For instance, work that satisfies the criteria for third class work very well would receive a mark of 48; work that clearly satisfies the criteria for lower second class work would receive a mark of 55; and work that minimally satisfies the criteria for upper second class work would receive a mark of 62.

The marks available in the first category differ to ensure that full use is made of the marking scale. In the case of first class work, we believe it is important that exceptional work by our students should earn the highest marks, and our steps are designed with this in mind. Any script that is judged to be worthy of a first is automatically awarded a 75. This does not mean that it is more difficult to achieve a first class mark: any work that minimally satisfies the criteria for first class work will receive a mark of 75. In addition, the steps for first class marks are different to the steps at other bands, being 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100. This ensures markers award exceptional work with the mathematically highest grades.

For work in the failing category, the marks available are 0, 12 (low), 25 (mid), and 38 (high). It is still possible to progress onto the next stage of your degree with a high fail mark of 38 if you have performed sufficiently well on other modules.

### Marks for non-essay-based assessments

For non-essay based assessments, fixed point marking is not used.

### Marks for multi-part assessments

Where an assessment task involves a number of individual components, the overall mark for the assessment will normally be a weighted average of the marks for the individual components. For instance, for an unseen examination in which candidates are required to answer three questions, each weighted equally, the overall mark will normally be the rounded average of the marks for each question. This is why it is important to plan your time carefully, and not spend a disproportionate amount of time answering individual questions in examinations.

## 7.3 Marking Procedures

In keeping with University policy, all unseen examinations and assessed essays are marked anonymously. In closed examinations, candidates identify their answers only by their examination numbers, which are issued to them by the University Examinations Office, and are not known to the markers. Candidate 'Y' numbers are printed on the student's University Card.

The Department takes every precaution to ensure the confidentiality of individual candidates. Only the administrative staff have access to information concerning the identification of students when assessments are anonymous.

Undergraduate summative assessments are anonymously moderated (marked by one Internal Examiner, and then an anonymous sample is checked by a second Internal Examiner) or second marked (marked anonymously by two Internal Examiners). In marking a single module an Internal Examiner gives a mark to each separate exam answer or essay, and on the basis of this computes a mark for the module as a whole. The role of the moderator is to 'identify and correct any problems with the distribution of marks for the module as a whole, or discrepancies in individual markers' distributions' (see the University's ['How to Mark' policy](#), point 54). In assessments with 'seen second marking', the role of the second marker is to 'confirm or challenge' the first marker's decision (see the University's ['How to Mark' policy](#), point 6). In cases of disagreement between markers, differences will be resolved through the process outlined in the [University's 'How to Mark' policy](#), point 55.

During the Summer Semester the "agreed" marks for every undergraduate Philosophy module are presented to the External Examiner who is required to confirm fairness, consistency and that academic standards have been maintained. (For an explanation of the role of the External Examiner, see Section 10.3 The Role of the External Examiner)

The University mark scale applied at undergraduate level (for modules level 3/HE level 0 to level 6 (H)) is as follows:

- First-class Honours 70-100
- Upper second-class Honours 60-69
- Lower second-class Honours 50-59
- Third-class Honours 40-49
- Fail 0-39

\* Note that in stages 1, 2, and 3, a fail mark of 30-39 is potentially compensatable. Lower marks and fails on pass/fail modules are outright fails. The rules about compensation and reassessment are complicated, and we advise students to read section 13 of the REASSESSMENT in Assessment Practices and Guide for Undergraduates document, available in the [Assessment Guides](#) section of the Philosophy department pages. Students should also refer to the [University Rules on Progression and Award for Undergraduate Students](#).