

## **University of Surrey Grade Descriptors: Undergraduate Programmes**

A task group including academic staff from all faculties and student representatives has prepared Grade Descriptors indicating the criteria that should be applied when allocating marks for Undergraduate Degree assignments.

The Grade Descriptors and associated criteria are presented below.

These descriptors align the university's practice in assessment with outside guidance from the QAA (FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements<sup>1</sup>) and will enable the university to ensure clarity and consistency of approach across the diverse discipline areas represented.

In addition to cross-faculty representation during the process of creation, these descriptors have been made available for Associate Deans Learning & Teaching and then the University Learning and Teaching Committee to agree. Subsequently Senate has approved the descriptors for dissemination via Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees.

### **Notes**

1. It is acknowledged that much good practice in the design of marking criteria already exists in the university. This exercise serves to confirm that this practice is consistent within the university and aligned to national standards and benchmarks.
2. Professional Body requirements will be included within marking schemes appropriate to assignments set. In some discipline areas it will be appropriate to exemplify work of a particular standard by model answers. All marking schemes and model answers will align with the University Grade Descriptors.
3. The principles embodied within the University Grade Descriptors should be a feature of assignment-specific marking schemes. These include:
  - clarity as to what constitutes work that represents **the whole range of available marks** (0% -100%),
  - the objectivity of the marking schemes, their alignment with the University Grade Descriptors, their match to the learning outcomes that are being assessed, and their relevance to the form of assessment selected,
4. Students should be made aware of University Grade Descriptors and how these relate to marking schemes for their assignments. The former will be communicated via the university website and should be included in programme handbooks. The latter should be communicated via module handbooks, in discussions with students and made clear in assignment briefs.
5. Linked to point 3 above, it will be essential that, however the University Grade Descriptors are developed into marking schemes, staff are able to explain these marking schemes to students in discussions early in the students' academic careers.
6. The design of challenging assignments (beyond essays and exams that test knowledge recall) **MUST** happen alongside the use of the University Grade Descriptors and clearly aligned discipline-specific marking schemes since, if there is no opportunity within the assignment for a student to demonstrate their higher level ability then this too will limit their ability to access marks at the higher end of the range.

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<sup>1</sup> FHEQ - <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/fheq/ewni08/>  
Subject Benchmarks - <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp>

## University of Surrey, Undergraduate Grade Descriptors

	<b>Command of the Subject</b>	<b>Subject Specific Skills and Practices</b>	<b>Scholarly and Professional Skills and Attitudes</b>
90-100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is exceptional and informed by the highest level of scholarship</li> <li>• Excellent integration of the full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Goes beyond the material displaying exceptional flair in tackling issues identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceptional application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes</li> <li>• Exceptional professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms.</li> </ul>	<p>Work that influences how academics and students think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being original within the discipline on the basis of its excellence;</li> <li>• Achieving the highest level of compelling, coherent and concise argument attainable within the level of study;</li> <li>• Using a full range of high quality sources to inform but not dominate the argument</li> </ul>
80-89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive, accurate, relevant and informed by advanced scholarship</li> <li>• Excellent integration of a full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Goes beyond the material with excellent conceptualisation which is original, innovative and/or insightful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent and original application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes</li> <li>• Excellent professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms.</li> </ul>	<p>Work that has real potential to influence how academics and students may think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being original on the basis of its excellence in the context of the level of study;</li> <li>• A compelling, coherent and concise argument;</li> <li>• Drawing on a full range of high quality sources.</li> </ul>
70-79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed by a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive, accurate, relevant with an awareness of advanced scholarship</li> <li>• Very good integration of a full range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Goes beyond the material with very good conceptualisation which is often original, innovative and/or insightful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistently applies theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes with some originality</li> <li>• Very good professional presentation using an appropriate range of resources and reflecting professional norms.</li> </ul>	<p>Work that has some potential to influence how academics and students may think about their discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some originality on the basis of its excellence in the context of the level of study;</li> <li>• Arguments which are coherent, concise and frequently compelling;</li> <li>• Drawing on a wide range of high quality sources.</li> </ul>
60-69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a breadth and depth of substantive knowledge that is comprehensive and accurate</li> <li>• Good integration of a range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Some good insight into the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear evidence of the application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes with few obvious flaws</li> <li>• Professional presentation using a good range of resources and reflecting professional norms.</li> </ul>	<p>Work that critically engages with current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used;</li> <li>• Arguments which are coherent and concise and offer robust conclusions;</li> <li>• The development of a good analytical model</li> </ul>

50-59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates an adequate breadth and depth of substantive knowledge but with only a few errors or omissions</li> <li>• Demonstrates an adequate understanding of a range of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Shows some ability to critically engage with the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate application of theoretical and technical knowledge to achieve learning outcomes although with some obvious flaws</li> <li>• Presentation which adequately reflects relevant professional norms</li> </ul>	<p>Work that accurately reports on current thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The repetition of, rather than critical engagement with, limited sources;</li> <li>• Adequate differentiation between the quality and appropriateness of sources used;</li> <li>• Drawing adequate conclusions which do not always fully reflect the complexity of the subject matter;</li> <li>• An adequate if unsophisticated analytical model.</li> </ul>
40-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete breadth and depth of substantive knowledge with some errors or omissions</li> <li>• Demonstrates an awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Limited and underdeveloped critical engagement with the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates limited ability to put theory into practice</li> <li>• Demonstrates limited technical ability but lacking theoretical and reflective insights</li> <li>• Presentation with reflects professional practice in a limited manner</li> </ul>	<p>Work that offers a limited understanding of thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited attention paid to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used;</li> <li>• Poorly informed opinion led work which lacks a clear evidence base;</li> <li>• A limited and underdeveloped structure of argument;</li> <li>• Work that is of limited coherence and clarity.</li> </ul>
30-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little relevant knowledge, which is minimal in its breadth and depth with major errors or omissions</li> <li>• Minimal awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Fails to demonstrate sufficient critical engagement with the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a minimal ability to meet learning outcomes in the grasp of both theory and technical knowledge</li> <li>• Presentation which displays little more than cursory attention to professional norms</li> </ul>	<p>Work that often misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal attention paid to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used;</li> <li>• Poorly informed opinion led work with a minimal evidence base;</li> <li>• No real underlying structure of argument;</li> <li>• Work that is frequently confused and incoherent.</li> </ul>
20-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not demonstrate even a basic understanding of the subject matter</li> <li>• Insufficient awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• Little evidence of critical engagement with the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks any real application of skills to meet learning outcomes</li> <li>• Fails to demonstrate any substantive meeting of learning outcomes</li> <li>• No real attention to the disciplinary norms of presentation</li> </ul>	<p>Work that fundamentally misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of attention to the quality, range and appropriateness of sources used;</li> <li>• Poorly informed opinion-led work rather than evidence based argument;</li> <li>• No real underlying structure of argument;</li> </ul>
10-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates confusion over the subject matter</li> <li>• Little awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques</li> <li>• No evidence of critical engagement with the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fails to demonstrate the use of skills to meet learning outcomes</li> <li>• Fails to demonstrate any substantive meeting of learning outcomes</li> <li>• No real attention to the disciplinary norms of presentation</li> </ul>	<p>Work that completely misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequacy of sources used;</li> <li>• Unsubstantiated assertion with no evidence base</li> <li>• Failure to structure the argument being presented;</li> </ul>
0-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates mainly ignorance of the subject matter by presenting information of minimal relevance.</li> <li>• Little or no awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning outcomes not met</li> <li>• No real attention to any norms of presentation.</li> </ul>	<p>Work that completely misrepresents or misunderstands thinking in the discipline through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence or misuse of sources;</li> <li>• Work that is confused and incoherent.</li> </ul>