

Essay Assessment and Grading

85% + High First Class

- demonstrates deep understanding and near-comprehensive knowledge of the subject, and shows significant originality in interpretation or analysis of the question.
- has a coherent structure, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and may show significant innovation in its organisational form.
- shows overwhelming evidence of in-depth reading, with clear indications of substantial independent reading beyond limits of reading lists and exceptionally intensive, detailed and critical reading of recommended texts.
- is excellently presented, with referencing and bibliography of standard of publishable journal article in subject area.
- has an incisive and fluent style, with no or very minor errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a high first class essay will demonstrate high levels of ability in the analysis of quantitative or qualitative information. A high first coursework essay will usually be worthy of retention for future reference in research or teaching.

70-84% First Class

- demonstrates deep understanding and detailed knowledge of the subject, and may show some originality in interpretation or analysis of the question.
- has a coherent structure, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and may show some innovation in its organisational form.
- shows significant evidence of in-depth reading, with clear indications of either independent reading beyond limits of reading lists or intensive, detailed and critical reading of prescribed readings.
- is excellently presented, with referencing and bibliography close to standard of publishable journal article in subject area.
- has an incisive and fluent style, with no significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a first class essay will demonstrate high levels of ability in the analysis of quantitative or qualitative information.

60-69% Upper Second Class

- demonstrates a clear understanding and wide-ranging knowledge of the subject, with a direct focus on question
- has a coherent structure, demonstrating good critical synthesis of secondary materials.
- shows clear evidence of in-depth reading, with substantial coverage of recommended texts.
- is well-presented, with detailed referencing in an acceptable style and a properly formatted bibliography.
- has a fluent style, with few errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, an upper second class essay will demonstrate generally effective and appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information.

50-59% Lower Second Class

- demonstrates a basic understanding and knowledge of the subject, with a focus on question
- has an adequate structure, usually drawing heavily on lectures or other direct teaching.
- shows evidence of limited further reading, with some coverage of recommended texts.
- is adequately presented, with some referencing of sources and a short bibliography.
- has a straightforward style, and may include some errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a lower second class essay will demonstrate familiarity with appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information; there may, however, be some significant errors in the process of analysis.

43-49% Third Class

- demonstrates some general understanding and knowledge of the subject, but will also show some weaknesses in detailed understanding or in its range of knowledge. There may be evidence of a lack of clear focus on the wording of the question.
- has a simple structure, usually drawing exclusively on lectures or other direct teaching.
- shows no or very limited evidence of further reading.
- has significant weaknesses in presentation, with little or no referencing of sources, and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- has a simple style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a third class essay will demonstrate some very general familiarity with appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information; there will, however, be significant errors in the process of analysis.

40-42% Low Third Class

- demonstrates limited general understanding of the subject, but will demonstrate significant weaknesses in detailed understanding. The coverage of the essay is likely to be sketchy, with some significant errors in factual details. There may be evidence of a lack of clear focus on the wording of the question.
- has a sketchy structure, usually drawing exclusively on lectures or other direct teaching, but with significant weaknesses
- shows no evidence of further reading.
- is poorly presented, with little or no referencing of sources, and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- has a sketchy style, and with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a marginal pass will demonstrate a bare familiarity with appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information; there will, however, be substantial errors in the process of analysis.

31-39% Marginal Failure

- demonstrates no understanding of the subject, and fails to address the question in any meaningful way. Information supplied is largely erroneous or has little or no relevance to the question.
- has an inadequate structure, with no sense of a logical argument.
- shows no evidence of further reading.
- is poorly presented, with no referencing of sources, and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- has an inadequate style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a marginal failure will show significant error and confusion over the appropriate analysis of quantitative or qualitative information; where some analytical work is attempted it is likely to be incomplete and erroneous. An essay which fulfils most criteria for second class work or better, but which totally misunderstand the question, or seem to be answering a distinctly different question should normally be placed in this category.

1-30% Clear Failure

- demonstrates no understanding of the subject, and fails to address the question in any meaningful way. Information supplied is erroneous or has no relevance to the question.
- has an incomplete, fragmentary or chaotic structure, with no sense of a logical argument.
- shows no evidence of further reading.
- is poorly presented, with no referencing of sources, and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- has an inadequate style, with substantial errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

Where appropriate, a clear failure will show complete inability to analyse quantitative or qualitative information.

0-29% Zero

This mark is usually reserved for essays that do not make any serious attempt to answer the question (as defined in College Regulations). It may also be used for exam offences such as unsanctioned late submission or plagiarism, in line with departmental and College procedures.