

Dissertation Assessment and Grading

85 + High First Class

- demonstrate deep understanding of its general subject area, and will show significant originality in the construction of its main research aims and questions.
- demonstrate substantial original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate high levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a reflexive or critical commentary on its research design and methodology.
- have a coherent structure, and may show significant innovation in its organisational form.
- show overwhelming evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and strong integration between its original research and wider theoretical issues.
- be professionally presented, with referencing and bibliography of standard of publishable journal article in subject area.
- have an incisive and fluent style, with no or very minor errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar. A high first class dissertation should be publishable as a journal paper with editing and minor revision.

70-84 First Class

- demonstrate deep understanding of its general subject area and may show some originality in the construction of its main research aims and questions.
- demonstrate substantial original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate high levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a reflexive or critical commentary on its research design and methodology.
- have a coherent structure and may show some innovation in its organisational form.
- show significant evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating excellent critical synthesis of secondary materials, and good integration between its original research and wider theoretical issues.
- be excellently presented, with referencing and bibliography of standard of publishable journal article in subject area.
- have an incisive and fluent style, with no significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

A first class dissertation should demonstrate professional standards of research design and management, and give confidence that the student could undertake professional work in a similar research context.

60-69 Upper Second Class

- demonstrate clear understanding of its general subject area, and provide a clear statement of research aims and questions.
- demonstrate significant original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate generally effective levels of ability in the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques and contain a commentary on its research design and methodology.
- have a coherent structure.
- show clear evidence of in-depth reading, demonstrating synthesis of secondary materials, and awareness of connections between its original research and wider theoretical issues.
- be well-presented, with detailed referencing in an acceptable style and a properly formatted bibliography.
- have a fluent style, with few errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

50-59 Lower Second Class

- demonstrate a basic understanding of its general subject area, and provide a simple statement of research aims and questions.
- demonstrate original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but may show some significant errors in the process of analysis or interpretation. It will also contain a basic account of the methods used.
- have an adequate structure.
- show some evidence of further reading of secondary materials, but often in the form of a general literature review rather than a synthesis of material directly relevant to the research aims.
- be adequately presented, with some referencing of sources and a short bibliography.
- have a straightforward style, and may include some errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

43-49 Third Class

- demonstrate a limited understanding of its general subject area. Its formulation of its research aims or question is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused.
- demonstrate a limited amount of original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate very general familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but will show significant errors in the process of analysis or interpretation.
- It may also contain a basic account of the methods used, but this is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused.
- have a simple structure.
- show very limited evidence of further reading of secondary materials.
- have significant weaknesses in presentation, with little or no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- have a simple style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

40-42 Low Third Class

- demonstrate a very limited understanding of its general subject area. Its formulation of its research aims or question is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused.
- demonstrate a very limited amount of original fieldwork or some other independent research, such as the analysis of primary published data, original laboratory research, archival research, or independent computer-based research.
- demonstrate a bare familiarity with the appropriate analytical and/or interpretative techniques, but will show substantial errors in the process of analysis or interpretation. It may also contain a basic account of the methods used, but this is likely to be simplistic, vague or confused.
- have a sketchy structure.
- show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials.
- be poorly presented, with little or no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- have a sketchy style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

31-39 Marginal Failure

- demonstrate no understanding of its general subject area.
- have no clear research aims or questions.
- be unable to demonstrate that original fieldwork or some other independent research has taken place.
- 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. It will contain no serious discussion of methods used.
- have an inadequate structure.

- show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials. be poorly presented, with no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- have an inadequate style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

1-30 Clear Failure

- demonstrate no understanding of its general subject area.
- have no clear research aims or questions.
- be unable to demonstrate that original fieldwork or some other independent research has taken place.
- contain no serious analytical work. It will contain no serious discussion of methods used.
- have an inadequate structure, and may be fragmentary, incoherent or incomplete.
- show no evidence of further reading of secondary materials.
- be poorly presented, with no referencing of sources and an inadequate or absent bibliography.
- have an inadequate style, with significant errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar.

0-29 Zero

This mark is usually reserved for cases where there is no serious attempt to complete the dissertation (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.