

Doctoral grading descriptors

Policy number/version	5.2.1.2/V01	
Section	ASSESSMENT AND INTEGRITY	
Type	Academic policy	
Date of creation	February 2019	
Date of last revision	August 2019	
Date of approval of current version	26 August 2019	
Post/section with responsibility for implementation and monitoring	Board of Studies	
Approved by	University Council	
Policy review	Latest review by	Head of Institutional Effectiveness
	Latest review date	January 2024
	Review outcome	No changes
	Next review date	September 2024
Cross reference/related documents:	1.0 Policies and procedures manual 5.1.3 Assessment (Masters) 5.2.1 Assessment regulations of doctoral degrees	

1.0 Rationale and principles which this policy seeks to uphold

- 1.1 The University wishes to make transparent the criteria to be applied in different methods of assessment of student performance.
- 1.2 The University wishes to make transparent the standards of performance indicated by numerical and letter grades.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 Applies to all taught elements of Doctoral degree programmes

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Assessment criteria are elements of performance that will be examined.
- 3.2 Different methods of assessment will contain different elements of performance.
- 3.3 Percentage grades equate to relative standards of performance, and these standards can be described.
- 3.4 Descriptions of standards will relate to the element of performance.

4.0 Policy

Doctoral Grade Descriptors

This matrix is fixed and should not be altered. Achievement descriptors are indicative. Course teams should interpret them as appropriate with reference to the mode of assessment and subject.

Criteria	Doctoral Grade Descriptor Indicators					
	Clear Fail		Marginal Fail	Good	Very Good	Excellent
	F 0-29%	E 30-39%	D 40-49%	C 50-59%	B 60-69%	A 70-100%
1. Knowledge and understanding: Identification of key issues and recognition of leading edge and new ideas	Little or no evidence of relevant background reading; unfocused; little or no attempt to relate to relevant areas; generally descriptive.	Unfocused background reading, with some reference to a relevant area; little or no identification of significant themes within the field, tends to be descriptive.	Evidence of some background reading in a relevant area; identification of some significant themes within the field.	Evidence of substantial background reading in some relevant areas; basic attempt at identification of theoretical formulation of argument; identification of some significant themes within the field.	Wide background reading including contemporary sources; explicit identification of theoretical formulation of argument; explicit identification and some linking of significant themes and some evidence of recognition of areas of dissonance between studies/	Extensive background reading including contemporary sources; explicit identification of theoretical formulation of argument; explicit identification and linking of significant and/or new themes and of areas of dissonance between studies/ authors/domains within the overall field.

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					authors/domains within the field.	
2. Knowledge and understanding: Awareness of a variety of standpoints	No level of awareness demonstrated between different authors.	Poor level of awareness; some attention drawn to the chronology of ideas and practices.	Basic level of awareness with little or no attempt to show the level of consistency evident within the accounts of authors / researchers / commentators; some attention drawn to the chronology of ideas and	General level of awareness with limited attempt to show the level of consistency evident within the accounts of leading authors / researchers / commentators; some attention drawn to the chronology of ideas and practices; limited challenges to the main	High level of awareness with some attempt to show the level of consistency evident within the accounts of leading authors / researchers / commentators; attention drawn to the chronology of ideas and practices; challenges to the main prevailing view(s).	Extremely high level of awareness with attention drawn to the level of consistency evident within the accounts of leading authors / researchers / commentators; attention drawn to the chronology of ideas and practices; challenges to prevailing views highlighted, new standpoints proposed and argued.

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			practices.	prevailing view(s).		
3. Application, argument and analysis: Extension and application of theoretical knowledge to generate new understandings	No evidence of argument or analysis applied to theoretical knowledge.	Generally descriptive accounts from poor quality sources with poor integration; little if any attention to the ways in which theoretical arguments and / or research findings have been used to inform practice.	Generally descriptive accounts of published authors with little or no integration; some attention to the ways in which theoretical arguments and / or research findings have been used to inform practice.	Limited integration and synthesis of accounts of published authors; attention to the ways in which theoretical arguments and / or research findings have been or could be used to inform practice.	Significant integration and synthesis of accounts of published authors; attention to the ways in which theoretical arguments and / or research findings have been or could be used to inform practice and make an original contribution to knowledge.	Extensive and consistent integration and synthesis of accounts of published authors; extrapolation from theory to generate further hypotheses; attention to the ways in which theoretical arguments and / or research findings have been or could be used to inform practice and make an original contribution to

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						knowledge.
4. Application, argument and analysis: Critical analysis of the sources or evidence bases	Poor evidence of background reading; no evidence of independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'.	Evidence of some background reading though generally superficial and not focused; poor evidence of independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'.	Evidence of relevant, though not in-depth, background reading; little evidence of independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'.	Some evidence of in-depth background reading; some evidence of independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'; generally little or no attention to features of research design such as sampling, methods	Evidence of in-depth background reading with attention to genre and epistemological assumptions; independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'; quality of evidence to support claims; attention to features of research design such as	Evidence of extensive and in-depth background reading with attention to genre and epistemological assumptions; independent critical evaluation of the reliability of 'evidence'; independent critical evaluation of the validity of claims made; quality of evidence to support claims; attention to

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				of data collection and analysis.	sampling, methods of data collection and analysis.	features of research design methodology
5. Communication & presentation: Suitability and /or potential for dissemination / publication including citation and referencing	Generally, unintelligible; no articulation of purpose, poor quality of presentation; poor coherence and disjointed flow.	Generally intelligible but articulation of purpose unclear, poor quality of presentation; poor coherence and flow rather disjointed.	Articulation of purpose on topic but lacking in clarity, adequate quality of presentation; poor coherence and flow sometimes disjointed.	Clearly articulated purpose, adequate quality of presentation; overall coherence and flow reasonable.	Communication almost at the standard of published academic work; clearly articulated purpose, good cognizance of the audience, high quality of presentation; overall coherence, flow, linkage and attention	Communication at the standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue and review with peers and experts in other specialisms; clearly articulated purpose, high cognizance of the audience, high quality of presentation; overall coherence, flow, linkage

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