Nottingham Trent University

Grading Scheme for Foundation Degree Courses

2012

The NTU Grading Scheme

This document defines the NTU generic level and grading descriptors for application to foundation degree assessment. The document also shows the relation between foundation degree classes, the seventeen grades of the NTU system, and the numerical equivalents and mark ranges applicable to assessment at the element and module level.

The purpose of defining these descriptors is to provide the NTU standard against which Schools can develop their own grading schemes.

Notes on the generic level descriptors

Generic level descriptors provide a guide to the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and degree of learner autonomy expected of a learner at different stages of study irrespective of the subject and context.

The University generic level descriptors included here are the same as those for undergraduate study and are consistent with the Ofqual[1] National Qualifications Framework Levels 4, and 5.

Course teams are asked to ensure that the level descriptors are contextualised to meet the focus and needs of Foundation Degree programmes. In designing or revising courses, course teams and module convenors should ensure that course outcomes at each level are appropriate to the level descriptors[2]. They may wish to include specific reference to the application of skills and knowledge in the world of work and the opportunity to progress to other qualifications as well as life long learning.

Notes on the general grading descriptors

The general grading descriptors define, for each foundation degree level, the standards of performance expected across the NTU seventeen point grading scale. These are aligned with the generic level descriptors identified above.

The descriptors define common characteristics expected of work at each of the different grade bands, at each foundation degree level.

The descriptors also include (bold text) elements of the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy. These define different levels of understanding across the grades in terms of the structural complexity of students' responses.

Schools and Academic Teams may choose to refine the general grading descriptors to suit specific discipline areas, however, it is important to retain the Solo Taxonomy features of the descriptors.

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[1] Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

[2] Academic Standards and Quality Handbook, October 2011. Section 12.2, 'Section 12.2: Foundation Degree (FD) Policy'.

Level 4 NQF (Level 1 NTU)

Generic level descriptors

Knowledge/Skills	Tasks/Procedures	Autonomy/ Responsibilities
Develops awareness of appropriate sources and how to locate them; employs a range of specialist foundation skills; generates a range of appropriate responses to unfamiliar problems; evaluates information and uses it to plan and develop investigation strategies and responses. Communicates effectively.	Operates in a range of contexts involving non-routine activities and new information. Shows judgment in planning and carrying out prescribed tasks.	Undertakes directed and a limited amount of self- directed activity.

General grading descriptors – Level 4 NQF (Level 1 NTU)

Class	Scale	General Characteristics
FIRST (Excellent)	Exceptional 1st	Exceptional knowledge and understanding of the subject and its underlying concepts; critical evaluation/synthesis/analysis and of reading/research; evidence of breadth and depth of reading/research to inform development of work; exceptional demonstration of relevant skills; excellent communication; performance in some, if not all, areas deemed beyond expectation of the level.
	High 1st	Excellent knowledge of the subject **as the student is typically able to go beyond what has been taught (particularly for a high 1st)**; evidence of breadth of reading/research to inform development of work; excellent demonstration of relevant skills; demonstrates strong communication skills.
	Mid 1st	
	Low 1st	
UPPER SECOND (Very good)	High 2.1	As below but very good work characterised by evidence of wider understanding of the subject as the student **is typically able to relate facts/concepts together with some ability to apply to known/taught contexts**; identification and selection of material to inform development of work; very good demonstration of relevant skills; demonstrates good communication skills.
	Mid 2.1	
	Low 2.1	
LOWER SECOND (Good)	High 2.2	A good breadth of knowledge and understanding of the taught content although **balanced towards the descriptive rather than analytical**; uses set material to inform development of work; addresses all aspects of the given brief; good demonstration of relevant taught skills, though may be limited in range; communication shows clarity but structure may lack coherence.
	Mid 2.2	
	Low 2.2	
THIRD (Sufficient)	High 3rd	**Knowledge and understanding is sufficient to deal with terminology, basic facts and concepts** but fails to make meaningful synthesis; relies on set material to inform development of work; generally addresses most of the requirements of the given brief; adequate demonstration of relevant skills over a limited range; communication/presentation is generally competent but with some weaknesses.
	Mid 3rd	
	Low 3rd	
FAIL (Insufficient)	Marginal Fail	Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject and its underlying concepts; some ability to evaluate given reading/research however work is more generally descriptive; naively follows or may ignore set material in development of work; given brief may be only tangentially addressed or may ignore key aspects of the brief; demonstration of relevant skills over a reduced range; communication shows limited clarity, poor presentation, structure may not be coherent.
	Mid Fail	Highly insufficient or no evidence of knowledge or understanding of the subject; **understanding of taught concepts is typically at the word level with facts being reproduced in a disjointed or decontextualised manner**; ignores set material in development of work; fails to address most or all of the requirements of the brief; fails to demonstrate relevant skills; lacks basic communication skills.
	Low Fail	
ZERO	Zero	Work of no merit OR absent, work not submitted, penalty in some misconduct cases.

Level 5 NQF (Level 2 NTU)

Generic level descriptors

Knowledge/Skills	Tasks/Procedures	Autonomy/ Responsibilities
Researches, analyses, reformats and evaluates a wide range of information; formulates appropriate responses to resolve unfamiliar and/or complex problems; commands a wide range of specialised and conceptual skills, generates ideas through the analysis of information and concepts. Communicates effectively.	Demonstrates command of a range of skills in a range of functions; exercises appropriate judgment in planning, carrying out and evaluating a range of procedures.	Within broad guidelines, accepts responsibility and accountability for determining and achieving outcomes, including group outcomes where appropriate; demonstrates a progression away from the close guidance appropriate at Year 1 (Level 4) through developing an extended repertoire of skills and applying them in less familiar and more complex situations.

General grading descriptors – Level 5 NQF (Level 2 NTU)

Class	Scale	General Characteristics
FIRST (Excellent)	Exceptional 1st	Exceptional breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the area of study; evidence of extensive and appropriate selection and critical evaluation/synthesis/analysis and of reading/research beyond the prescribed range, in both breadth and depth, to advance work/direct arguments; exceptional demonstration of relevant skills; excellent communication; performance deemed to be beyond expectation.
	High 1st	Outstanding/excellent knowledge and understanding of the area of study **as the student is typically able to go beyond what has been taught (particularly for a mid/high 1st)**; evidence of extensive and appropriate selection and critical evaluation/synthesis/analysis of reading/research **beyond the prescribed range**, to advance work/direct arguments; excellent demonstration of relevant skills; excellent communication; performance deemed beyond expectation of the level.
	Mid 1st	
	Low 1st	
UPPER SECOND (Very good)	High 2.1	Very good knowledge and understanding of the area of study as the student **is typically able to relate facts/concepts together with some ability to apply to known/taught contexts**; evidence of appropriate selection and evaluation of reading/research, some beyond the prescribed range, may rely on set sources to advance work/direct arguments; demonstrates autonomy in approach to learning; very good demonstration of relevant skills; strong communication skills.
	Mid 2.1	
	Low 2.1	
LOWER SECOND (Good)	High 2.2	Good knowledge and understanding of the area of study **balanced towards the descriptive rather than analytical**; evidence of appropriate selection and evaluation of reading/research but generally reliant on set sources to advance work/direct arguments; good demonstration of relevant skills, though may be limited in range; communication shows clarity but structure may not always be coherent.
	Mid 2.2	
	Low 2.2	
THIRD (Sufficient)	High 3rd	**Knowledge and understanding is sufficient to deal with terminology, basic facts and concepts** but fails to make meaningful synthesis; some ability to select and evaluate reading/research however work may be more generally descriptive; strong reliance on available support set sources to advance work; arguments may be weak or poorly constructed; adequate demonstration of relevant skills over a limited range; communication/presentation is generally competent but with some weaknesses.
	Mid 3rd	
	Low 3rd	
FAIL (Insufficient)	Marginal Fail	Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the area of study; some ability to select and evaluate reading/research however work is more generally descriptive; fails to address some aspects of the brief; a limited use of sources to advance work; arguments may be weak/poor or weakly/poorly constructed; demonstration of relevant skills over a reduced range; communication shows limited clarity, poor presentation, structure may not be coherent.
	Mid Fail	Highly insufficient knowledge or understanding of the area of study; **understanding is typically at the word level with facts being reproduced in a disjointed or decontextualised manner**; fails to address the outcomes addressed by the brief; typically ignores important sources in development of work and data/evidence inappropriately used; weak technical and practical competence hampers ability to demonstrate/communicate achievement of outcomes.
	Low Fail	
ZERO	Zero	Work of no merit OR absent, work not submitted, penalty in some misconduct cases.

Relation of grades, mark ranges and numerical equivalents to foundation degree classes

Class	Grade	Mark range	Numerical equivalent
Distinction	Exceptional 1st	93 - 100	96
	High 1st	85 - 92	89
	Mid 1st	78 - 84	81
	Low 1st	70 - 77	74
Commendation	High 2.1	67 - 69	68
	Mid 2.1	64 -66	65
	Low 2.1	60 - 63	62
Pass	High 2.2	57 - 59	58
	Mid 2.2	54 - 56	55
	Low 2.2	50 - 53	52
	High 3rd	47 - 49	48
	Mid 3rd	44 - 46	45
	Low 3rd	40 - 43	42
Fail	Marginal fail	35 - 39	38
	Mid fail	30 - 34	32
	Low fail	1 - 29	18
Zero	Zero	0	0

Centre for Academic Development and Quality
Nottingham Trent University
Dryden Centre 202
Dryden Street
Nottingham
NG1 4FZ