

Department of Gender Studies

Postgraduate Marking Criteria

The criteria outlined below are designed to show the broad qualitative characteristics indicative of the classifications that we use. These classifications are **Distinction** (range: Excellent to Outstanding), **Merit** (range: Good to Very Good) **Pass** (range: Satisfactory) **Fail** (range: Unsatisfactory). We consider writing essays and examinations to be a creative process and in our subject area there are neither 'model' answers nor single recipes for achieving a good mark. We recognise that there are many different ways of successfully approaching any one question or assignment, and answers employing very different arguments may be equally successful. References to e.g. appropriateness, relevance and use of material refer to the argument and approach that you present rather than to some abstract 'model' answer. Your work is assessed on both its strengths and weaknesses and the mark reflects a combination of these. Weakness in one area may be compensated for by strength elsewhere (e.g. scoring well on conceptual understanding or originality but less well on in depth analysis or focus on the question set). The assessment criteria employed by the department described below are intended to be indicative of the categories rather than exhaustive specifications. The criteria are used to assess both formative and summative work.

Attributes listed for each classification are assumed to include the best attributes from the class below.

Course work

Classification	Marks	Attributes
Distinction (Outstanding)	80 +	Work of outstanding quality which carefully situates and directly engages with the question, demonstrates high levels of scholarship and originality, mastery of analytic techniques and/or research methods, theoretical sophistication, incisive critical analysis of salient issues, elegance in writing and expression. No major room for improvement given the constraints of the assignment.
Distinction (Excellent)	70-80	Work of excellent quality demonstrating a high level of conceptual and theoretical engagement to produce a thorough and consistent approach which engages closely with the implications of the question (where relevant) as well as its surface meaning. Work will either demonstrate wide knowledge and in depth understanding that is presented critically, with insight and independence of thought. Or, it will demonstrate a degree of originality in the form of persuasive and well evidenced new ideas or unusual connections. Referencing is complete, appropriate and consistent. Some minor revisions could be made to improve further.

Merit (Very Good)	65-69	Work of a very good standard demonstrating comprehension, clarity of thought and expression with some analytical and theoretical sophistication, a wide knowledge of course and extended literature and a superior marshalling of evidence. Some evidence of independent thought and reading but hasn't quite reached levels of originality or development of ideas as distinction level work. Indicates capability of doing PhD work in future.
Merit (Good)	60-64	Work of a good standard that offers a sustained level of competence in coverage of subject matter, and command of the relevant course literature. Most of the implications of the question will be explored, but not necessarily all. Good, but not impeccable standard of factual accuracy and interpretive coverage, clear argument and sound conceptual grip, Competent use of referencing and stylistic conventions (e.g. Harvard)
Pass (Average)	55-59	Work of an average standard that shows some ability to reflect on course readings and lectures and demonstrates familiarity with the terms and concepts bound up in the question and uses knowledge and evidence fairly well. Compared with merit level work it may lack depth and coherence in presenting arguments, analysis or ideas. May deviate from a direct response to the question that was posed.
Pass (satisfactory)	50-54	A rather basic answer to the question which demonstrates some knowledge and a basic understanding of lectures and course materials but which has not gone beyond this level of engagement. The work may be overly descriptive with very limited analysis. Argument is not well conceptualized or supported, There may be some stylistic, grammatical or factual errors and/or some inconsistencies in logic or minor errors in understanding.
Fail (unsatisfactory, condonable)	40-49	Demonstrates limited or very shallow understanding of the assignment and lacks evidence of knowledge of the subject or course materials. Fails to demonstrate an appropriate level of engagement and use of relevant literature. May be overly reliant on lecture material or on a few sources. Structure and presentation of the paper is unfocused, poorly presented or structured and contains significant errors. Very limited reflection and analytical engagement.
Fail (bad fail, uncondonable)	<39	Work is incomplete or fails to show evidence of understanding or reading. It may be very poorly presented or lack referencing.

Dissertation (GI499)

The basic criteria for the assessment of the dissertation is the same as for other course work (as outlined above). In addition, however, the dissertation is assessed in relation to the overall requirement **to design and execute a research project independently**, in some cases this may include fieldwork. In order to achieve the highest level (80+, Outstanding) work will be considered potentially publishable (with some modification or revision).

Take home assessment exams

The basic criteria for the assessment is the same as for other course work (as outlined above) However in the case of the unseen take home written assignment the restricted time available will be taken into account. Markers will be particularly attentive to rewarding evidence that the candidate has marshalled appropriately the theory and substantive material encountered across the course to provide a coherent argument that addresses the specific question or task set.