

RESEARCH ESSAY/DISSERTATION/THESIS PORTFOLIO GRADING SYSTEM

Grade		Description
A+	Exceptionally high level of performance	<p>A thesis/portfolio in the A range is a <i>sustained, coherent</i> contribution that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates broad understanding of the subject, including current debates • demonstrates clear evidence of a scholarly stance, including a high level of independent and critical thinking • demonstrates evidence of effective synthesis of ideas • demonstrates coherence between theoretical position, methodology and questions • gathers original high quality data (where applicable) and analyses it in a careful and coherent manner • demonstrates thorough investigative research, high level problem- solving and/or high level creative performance • demonstrates the student's ability to critically evaluate their own research in the context of the existing body of literature • may demonstrate originality in topic, method, theoretical development, creative practice or findings and conclusions (this would be expected at A+ level) • may include material of publishable quality • may include work that is exceptional or highly original in one area, but not fully realised or consistent in other sections/elements. Such work may reach A- standard • is presented to a consistently high standard • demonstrates that the student has the capacity for doctoral research and would be a viable scholarship candidate.
A	Clear high level of performance	
A-	First class	
B+	Very good	
		<p>B grade theses/portfolios are sound and compelling, and demonstrate evidence of critical thinking and an understanding of a significant body of knowledge. Work at this level also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a logical overall argument • selects and applies suitable methods • gathers original data (where applicable) and analyses it in a careful and coherent manner

B	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides evidence which clearly supports its findings and arguments • may in parts be more descriptive than evaluative or synthesised • may not fully realise the possibilities of the research data/findings • includes discussions and/or conclusions which show some appreciation of the significance of the findings • may make fewer or weaker links to existing research, theoretical concepts or creative practice than would be expected in A level work
B-	Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is presented to a generally high standard but may contain noticeable errors in referencing, punctuation, grammar and/or spelling • at the B+ level, demonstrates that the student could be expected to be successful in doctoral research with strong supervisor support and further skill development in some areas. • at the B or B- level, does not demonstrate that the student has capacity for doctoral level research.

Grade		Description
C+	Clear pass	<p>A thesis/portfolio in the C range:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates understanding and analytical ability at a level that is clearly beyond undergraduate level • presents an overall argument, but may not be fully developed or consistent in its application • outlines a research plan and applies appropriate methods • demonstrates competence in the formulation, conduct and analysis of an independent piece of research • is generally sound but may be uneven or limited in some respect • may demonstrate limited evidence of synthesis and critical engagement with literature • is likely to focus more on description than analysis of findings • has appropriate, but limited, evidence in the support of its findings and arguments • does not demonstrate that the student has capacity for doctoral level research • is competent in its presentation, but may have numerous, obvious errors of referencing, punctuation, spelling and/or grammar.
C	Pass	
C-	Marginal pass	
D	Fail	<p>A thesis/portfolio in the D range demonstrates serious deficiencies in one or more expected elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may present research literature, theory or methods ineffectively, inaccurately or in an unreflective way • may lack an overall argument • lacks breadth and depth • lacks cohesion across the thesis/portfolio • contains limited or inappropriate evidence • interpretation may be minimal or flawed • presentation is poor with numerous errors of referencing, punctuation, spelling and/or grammar.