**MARKING CRITERIA**

The criteria below are used when marking LN400 final-year dissertations. As with coursework essays, there are three categories of assessment:

1. **Content**: the selection of relevant, detailed and accurate data, demonstrating a fundamental knowledge and understanding of the subject, and showing evidence of context and broader pertinent issues.
2. **Analysis**: the ability to interpret the content critically, persuasively and creatively, whether evaluating accepted judgements in the light of independent analysis, or in presenting material in a thoughtful and incisive manner, so as to form a coherent argument that convincingly tackles questions raised or demands re-evaluation.
3. **Presentation**: the exposure and expression of dissertation subject in focused and flowing prose of an engaging and authoritative style. Spelling, punctuation and grammar should be correct, and the dissertation should be accompanied by a well-researched and properly presented bibliography, a set of necessary notes, and any other appropriate supporting material.

All three categories are considered in the overall allocation of marks. Whilst a sound and detailed knowledge of primary material remains essential, a convincing and well-executed dissertation involves demonstration of critical analysis, creative argumentation and engaging presentation. The dissertation must have an argument, a critical engagement with secondary reading, and a rigorous acknowledgement of all sources.

**MARKING CRITERIA FOR UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATIONS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Scale** | **Numerical equivalent** | **Descriptor** |
| **First** | Excellent first | 100  94 | **TRULY OUTSTANDING WORK**  **Content brilliant and original; argument impressive and compelling; writing flawlessly fluent. Work may achieve or closely resemble a publishable standard**   * Outstandingly perceptive and accurate analysis of primary and secondary material * Outstanding grasp of all relevant contexts * Outstandingly well structured and clearly argued * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is comprehensive, authoritative and correctly presented throughout |
| High first | 88 | **EXCEPTIONAL WORK**  **Content exceptional and truly engaging; argument original and engaging; writing very fluent**   * Exceptional and accurate analysis of primary and secondary material * Exceptional grasp of all relevant contexts * Exceptionally well structured and clearly argued * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is comprehensive and correctly presented throughout |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Mid first | 82  78 | **REALLY EXCELLENT WORK**  **Content really excellent and engaging; argument really excellent; writing fluent**   * Really excellent analysis of primary and secondary material * Really excellent grasp of all relevant contexts * Really excellent structure and argumentation * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is comprehensive and correctly presented throughout |
| Low first | 74 | **EXCELLENT WORK**  **Content excellent and engaging; argument excellent; writing fluent**   * Excellent analysis of primary and secondary material * Excellent grasp of all relevant contexts * Excellent structure and argumentation * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is comprehensive and correctly presented |
| **Upper second** | High 2:1 | 68 | **VERY GOOD WORK**  **Content demonstrates a very good understanding of existing debates; argument very good; very good writing and presentation**   * Very good quality independent research, coupled with demonstrable skills in organizing, synthesizing and reviewing a range of existing debates * Very good and largely accurate analysis of primary and secondary material * Very good and largely comprehensive grasp of relevant contexts * Very well structured and argued * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is largely comprehensive and correctly presented |
| Mid 2:1 | 65 | **GOOD WORK**  **Content demonstrates a good understanding of existing debates; argument good; good writing and presentation**   * Good quality independent research, coupled with some demonstrable skills in organizing, synthesizing and reviewing a range of existing debates * Good and generally accurate analysis of primary and secondary material * Good and generally comprehensive grasp of relevant contexts * Well structured and argued * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is fairly comprehensive and generally correctly presented |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Low 2:1 | 62 | **MOSTLY GOOD WORK**  **Content demonstrates a largely proficient understanding of existing debates; argument is largely clear; mostly good writing and presentation**   * Mostly good quality independent research, coupled with some demonstrated ability to organize, synthesize and review a range of existing debates * Mostly good and accurate analysis of primary and secondary material, with some minor errors * Mostly secure grasp of relevant contexts, but with a slight lack of detail or nuance * Mostly good structure and argumentation, but with occasional errors in the organization of paragraphs and or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography is largely comprehensive and mostly correctly presented but with minor errors |
| **Lower second** | High 2:2 | 58 | **COMPETENT WORK**  **Content demonstrates a competent understanding of existing debates; argument is competent if lacking in focus or originality; competent writing and presentation**   * Competent independent research skills; some ability to review a range of existing debates, but with inaccuracies and omissions * Competent analysis of primary and secondary material, but with minor errors relating to primary source or critical terms, some over-reliance on secondary sources, or a failure to engage with a key secondary resource * Competent grasp of some relevant contexts, but with a lack of detail and with some minor errors * Competent structure and argumentation, but with some errors in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Competent referencing/bibliography/filmography, but with gaps and errors |
| Mid 2:2 | 55 | **MOSTLY COMPETENT WORK**  **Content demonstrates a mostly competent understanding of some existing debates; argument is mostly competent, but lacking in focus, originality or consistent quality; mostly competent writing and presentation but uneven in quality**   * Mostly competent independent research skills; some ability to review a limited range of existing debates albeit without accuracy, completion or originality * Mostly competent analysis of primary and secondary material, but with notable errors relating to primary source or critical terms, over-reliance on secondary sources, or a failure to engage with a key secondary resource * Mostly competent grasp of some relevant but limited contexts, with a lack of detail and errors * Mostly competent structure and argumentation though of uneven quality, with errors in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Mostly competent referencing/bibliography/filmography though of uneven quality and with several notable errors |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Low 2:2 | 52 | **INSECURE WORK**  **Content demonstrates a limited understanding of existing debates; argument is insecure and limited; writing and presentation are insecure**   * Limited research skills; unconvincing review of a limited range of existing debates; accuracies, incompletion, lack of originality * Analysis of primary and secondary material contains significant errors relating to primary source or critical terms, significant over-reliance on secondary sources, or failure to engage with meaningful secondary resources * Limited grasp of contexts, with significant errors * Insecure structure and argumentation, with significant weaknesses in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography contains significant errors and/or omissions |
| **Third** | High third | 48 | **WEAK WORK**  **Content demonstrates a very limited understanding of existing debates; argument is very insecure and limited; writing and presentation are very insecure and inaccurate**   * Weak research skills; superficial or inaccurate review of existing debates; no evidence of critical engagement * Analysis of primary and secondary material contains many significant errors relating to primary source or critical terms, including basic lack of knowledge, significant misunderstanding of secondary sources, or general failure to engage with meaningful secondary resources * Weak grasp of any context, with significant errors * Weak and unclear structure and argumentation, with significant errors and weaknesses in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography largely inaccurate or even absent |
| Mid third  to Low third | 45  42 | **EXTREMELY WEAK WORK**  **Content demonstrates an extremely weak understanding of the subject; extremely weak argument; writing and presentation are very poor and error-strewn**   * Extremely weak research skills; extremely weak or no evidence of debate or critical engagement * Analysis of primary and secondary material contains extensive errors relating to primary source or critical terms, including basic lack of knowledge, significant misunderstanding of secondary sources, or general failure to engage with meaningful secondary resources * Extremely weak grasp of any context, with extensive errors * Extremely weak and wholly unclear structure and argumentation, with extensive errors and weaknesses in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography systematically inaccurate or even absent |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fail** | High Fail (sub honours) | 38 | **INADEQUATE WORK**  **Content demonstrates inadequate understanding of the subject; inadequate argument; writing and presentation are extremely poor and failing to meet degree standard**   * Inadequate research skills; no evidence of debate or critical engagement * No analysis of primary and secondary material. Presentation of material contains extensive errors and omissions, including little or no knowledge, major misunderstandings, and general failure to engage with meaningful secondary resources * No grasp of any context, with extensive errors * Structure and argumentation inadequate to the point of hindering communication, with continuous errors and weaknesses in the organization of paragraphs and/or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography inadequate or even absent |
| Fail | 32 | **WHOLLY INADEQUATE WORK, FAILING TO MEET THE STANDARDS REQUIRED FOR FINAL-YEAR HONOURS DEGREE**  **Content demonstrates wholly inadequate understanding of the subject; wholly inadequate argument; writing and presentation are wholly inadequate and failing to meet degree standard**   * Wholly inadequate research skills; no evidence of debate or engagement * No analysis of primary and secondary material. Presentation of material contains fundamental and extensive errors and omissions, including almost no knowledge, major misunderstandings, and general failure to engage with meaningful secondary resources * Absolutely no grasp of any context, with fundamental and extensive errors * Structure and argumentation wholly inadequate to the point of incomprehensibility, with no ability to organize paragraphs and/or in syntax * Referencing/bibliography/filmography wholly inadequate or even absent |
| Low fail | 25  12 | Work that falls well below the standards required for the final year of an Honours degree |
| **Zero** | Zero | 0 | Work of no merit OR Absent, work not submitted, penalty in some misconduct cases |