EXAM SKILLS

This part contains some general advice to students on how to obtain good grades through the manner in which they approach various kinds of testing and examination assignments.

General advice on approaching assessment tasks

1 NAMES AND TERMS TESTS

These are of the type that appears at the end of each chapter in the book. If examiners choose to use this type of test, you will need to obtain the following information:

- Whether direct quotations from the text are acceptable.
- Whether a paraphrase of the text is acceptable.
- Whether evidence is being sought of further reading which enables you to provide an original form of wording in the answer. If this is the case, you will need to follow up the end-of-chapter or website recommendations for further reading before approaching this type of assessment.

2 ESSAY GUIDELINES

If your examiners have specified essay-type assignments which you are expected to complete in your own time, the following suggestions may help you to maximize your grades.

- Write down the title of your essay at the beginning.
- Make sure that you are addressing the question rubric at all times throughout your writing.
- Do NOT write simply what you know or would like to write about the subject as though the question rubric did not exist.
- Respect the word limit, if applicable. Your institution or individual examiners are likely to apply penalties if it is not achieved or if it is considerably exceeded.
- Respect the deadline for submission. Your institution or individual examiners are likely to apply penalties ranging from absolute refusal to mark work submitted late to the imposition of graduated penalties which will adversely affect the final grade which you obtain.
- Ensure that the structure of your essay complies with any guidelines provided by the examiners. Normally, a clear structure consisting of an introduction, formal division into paragraphs or sections and a conclusion will be appropriate.
The provision of a bibliography with evidence that the items listed have actually been consulted for the purposes of the preparation of the essay will normally be required.

Observe the conventions specified by your institution for the setting out of the items listed in the bibliography.

Do not collaborate with or copy from other students in the preparation of your essay.

If you are not sure what constitutes an offence of plagiarism, the following website may be of help:

Plagiarism Checkers Inc.
www.checkforplagiarism.net

How do I interpret the result that I obtain for essay work?

The table below is only for general guidance. Its levels and equivalences may be completely different from those in use in the institution in which you are studying. Educational institutions in the UK employ a variety of marking systems so an attempt has been made to supply equivalences in some of these different systems. Sometimes the work will form part of an assessment for a specific qualification – perhaps a degree – so one of Britain’s degree classification systems appears in the final column of equivalences. This system is not in use in all of Britain’s universities and it would not apply to other types of qualifications at sub-degree levels.

A basic, possible system of equivalences is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Degree Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>80–100</td>
<td>A*</td>
<td>1 Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>70–80</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1 First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60–70</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.1 Upper Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50–60</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.2 Lower Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>40–50</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>3 Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30–40</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Marginal Fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0–30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bad Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q  What does a Level 1 mark mean?

A  It depends on your institution’s marking practices. Some are more generous than others. Some institutions will only give a mark in this range to work which is of publication standard without editorial intervention. To get such a mark you would have to have read very widely about the subject. Your essay would have to be highly and totally original and demonstrate a good capacity
to interpret data from your original research. It would have to be very well
structured and referenced and expressed in virtually perfect English.
If you receive a mark in this range you have no worries at all.

Q  What does a Level 2 mark mean?

A  Generally it means that you have produced a first class piece of work which
has more than satisfied the marker. Originality, your researching of the topic
and your general level of presentation are excellent.
If you receive a mark in this range you are heading for a good overall result.

Q  What does a Level 3 mark mean?

A  Usually that your work is of a very good standard – above the average of most
of the students in your group.
If you obtain a mark in this range you are performing well and should obtain a
good overall result.

Q  What does a Level 4 mark mean?

A  It usually means that you are performing at an average level for the group you
are in and that you should have no difficulty obtaining a good average pass
mark at the end of your period of study. Marks in this range will probably be
received by most of your group. If you work harder you should be able to
obtain even higher grades in future assessments.

Q  What does a Level 5 mark mean?

A  Normally it means that you are performing below the level of the rest of your
group. It may mean that you have only just succeeded in passing the
assessment because in many institutions the pass mark is 40. Clearly you have
not done very well. You need to obtain advice on how to improve your
performance and obtain a higher grade next time.

Q  What does a Level 6 mark mean?

A  It means that you have failed this particular assessment. It also means that you
may have a good chance of passing a repeat assessment if you do more work
and seek guidance on how to improve your performance. You need to obtain
advice quickly because often the work or another assessment may follow in a
few weeks. You should also make a greater effort to read about the subject and
to make sure that you are carefully following the essay guidelines.

Q  What does a Level 7 mark mean?
A It means that you have failed the assessment quite badly and that you will have to do a great deal of work if you are to improve your performance. If the mark is in the range 0 per cent to 10 per cent, it suggests that you have very little hope of passing this kind of assessment in the near future. It might be best to study some other subject. Sometimes it may just be that your English is not yet good enough for you to do essay questions. What you may need to do is aim at improving your basic language skills.

3 MULTIPLE CHOICE AND COMPUTERIZED TEST GUIDELINES

In order to maximize your grades on this type of test, you are advised to follow these procedures:

- Study the material from the book and any other documents which have been specified as essential reading. You should read this material several times until you are familiar with it. If there are things which you do not understand, ask your instructor or discuss the issues with other students or with native speakers of English.

- Before starting any computerized test, make sure that you have identified yourself clearly on the terminal which you are using.

- Answer ALL the questions. If you only answer 50 per cent of the questions and you get some answers wrong, you will certainly fail the assessment. Even if you do not know the answer to a question, you should attempt to guess it. It is fairly unlikely that marks will be deducted for wrong answers so you might just obtain one or two additional marks.

- Do not attempt to guess the answers to all the questions or to select the same number for all questions in multiple choice tests.. If you do, you will fail because the test will have been designed to ensure that you cannot pass it by doing this.

- Do not copy answers from the papers of other students or from the computer screens of the student(s) sitting next to you. If you do, you will probably fail the assignment because the software will detect what you have done. Your institution may apply severe penalties to your grades and may even take further action against you.

- Before you log off from any computerized test, make sure that the data from your answers has been recorded on your file. If you have any problems, consult the administrator.

- If you are permitted to see your score at the end of the assessment, do not assume that it will be the same as the final grade which you are allocated. Some institutions scale or adjust marks for purposes connected with the aims of the assessment. Sometimes, external examiners request modifications to raw scores if they consider that the test has been too easy or too difficult.