

SENATE MARKING SCALE (MASTERS LEVEL): PROJECTS & DISSERTATIONS

	Classification	Learning outcomes & scholarship	Presentation	Methodology	Argument & understanding	Criticality & analysis	Use of sources and evidence	Academic referencing	Written communication
Distinction	90-100% Distinction (Upper Range)	Significant learning outcomes are met to an exemplary standard showing creativity, inventiveness, independence of judgement and consistent evidence of originality of thought and expression. Demonstrates an exemplary understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains the highest standards of scholarship that can be expected of a Masters level project or dissertation.	Exemplary presentation: clear, logical, imaginative, creative and original. Almost flawless. Conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	A highly sophisticated methodology. Demonstrates exemplary sensitivity in the use of quantitative and/or qualitative methods. Research tools employed are of exemplary standard. Exemplary awareness of research ethics. Methodology conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	Highly effective and sustained arguments, demonstrating exemplary level of understanding of the topic and associated issues/debates. Addresses all aspects of the assignment to exemplary standard. Conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	Work demonstrates exemplary standard of critical analysis and/or originality and creativity. Exemplary in its use of ideas, concepts and theory. Exemplary analysis of data. Exemplary level of self-reflection. Conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	Exemplary use of sources/case studies and/or evidence. Demonstrates deeply impressive command of data or literature, drawing on an exemplary range of material/evidence and/or examining the topic in considerable detail. Demonstrates an exemplary sensitivity to the limits/limitations of evidence. Conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	Exemplary in all respects. Outstanding bibliography with academic referencing conventions employed accurately, consistently and according to established practice within the discipline. Conforms to the highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.	Exemplary standard of written English. Written communication, including use of subject-specific language, is of highest standard that can be reasonably expected from a Masters level project or dissertation.
Distinction	80-89% Distinction (Middle Range)	Significant learning outcomes have been fully met to a very high standard. The submission shows clear signs of perceptiveness and some originality of thought and expression. Demonstrates a strong understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains a very high level of scholarship, though small potential improvements can be readily identified.	A very high standard of presentation: clear, logical and very few errors.	Coherent and articulate arguments, demonstrating a very high level of understanding of the topic and associated issues/debates. Has addressed most or all aspects of the assignment to a very high standard. Understanding of research ethics demonstrated to a very high standard.	Coherent, articulate and resourcefully constructed arguments, demonstrating a very high level of understanding of the topic and associated issues/debates. Has addressed most or all aspects of the assignment to a very high standard.	Work demonstrates a very high standard of critical analysis and/or originality and creativity. Employs ideas, concepts and theories with confidence. Very high level of self-reflection.	Work demonstrates a very strong command of data or literature, drawing on a broad range of material and/or examining the topic in some detail. Demonstrates a very high level of awareness of, and sensitivity to, the limits of evidence.	A very high standard of referencing throughout. Bibliography conforms to a very high standard. Errors very few and mostly very minor.	A very high standard of written English
Distinction	70-79% Distinction	Significant learning outcomes have been fully met to a high standard. Demonstrates a strong understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains an impressive level of scholarship, though there may be scope for improvement in a number of areas.	A high standard of presentation: clear, logical and few errors.	The dissertation is underpinned by a sound methodology. Demonstrates a high level of skill and sensitivity in the use of quantitative and/or qualitative methods. Research tools employed are of a high standard. Understanding of research ethics demonstrated to a high standard.	Coherent and articulate arguments, demonstrating a high level of understanding of the topic and associated issues/debates. Has addressed most or all aspects of the assignment to a high standard.	Work demonstrates a high standard of critical analysis and/or originality and creativity. Employs ideas, concepts and theories to good effect. High level of self-reflection.	Work demonstrates a strong command of data or literature, drawing on a broad range of material and/or examining the topic in some detail. Demonstrates a high level of awareness of, and sensitivity to, the limits of evidence.	A high standard of referencing throughout. Bibliography conforms to a high standard, though there may be a number of small errors which can be easily corrected in future submissions.	A high standard of written English

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Merit	65-69% High Merit	Significant learning outcomes have been met to a very good standard. Demonstrates a good understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains a good level of scholarship, but lacks the sophistication of execution required for a distinction.	A very good standard of presentation: clear, mostly logical, and errors are mostly very minor. Lacks the presentational sophistication required for a distinction.	Some weaknesses in methodology or use of research tools, but very good attempt at the research process. Competent use of quantitative & qualitative methods. Research tools of good standard. Very good awareness of research ethics. Methodological approach lacks the sophistication required for a distinction.	The submission shows a very good grasp of the subject and contains evidence of insight. Though it may lack finesse, it is thorough, clear and shows a very good understanding of the subject/topic. Has addressed most or all aspects of the assignment. Lacks intellectual independence required for a distinction.	The work contains some very good examples of critical analysis and but limited originality and creativity in use of ideas, concepts, case studies etc. Very good level of self-reflection though some scope for development. Critical approach lacks the sophistication required for a distinction.	The student draws on a very good range of material but lacks breadth of engagement with the secondary literature required for a distinction. Judicious use of sources and evidence appropriate to the discipline. Topics are mostly addressed mostly examined in sufficient detail. Very good awareness of the limits of evidence.	A very good standard of referencing, though a number of errors or inconsistencies may be present. Very good bibliography but possibly containing technical errors, some minor, some more serious. Referencing practice lacks sophistication required for a distinction.	A very good standard of written English, with only minor errors present. Lacks the sophistication required for a distinction.
Merit	60-64% Merit	Significant learning outcomes have been met, mostly to a good standard. Demonstrates understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains a good level of scholarship and demonstrates clear evidence of engagement in the discipline that lifts it above the merely 'competent'. Exceeds the requirements of a Pass.	A good standard of presentation: clear, mostly logical, and errors are mostly very minor. There may be occasional and relatively minor flaws in structure.	Methodology good but may contain a number of minor flaws. Research tools are functional but lack finesse. The research approach is competent but unimaginative. Competent but basic use of quantitative & qualitative methods. Good awareness of research ethics.	The submission shows a good grasp of the subject and contains evidence of insight. Though it may lack finesse, it is mostly thorough, largely clear and shows a good understanding of the subject/topic. Has addressed most aspects of the assignment.	The work contains some good examples of critical analysis and but limited originality and creativity in use of ideas, concepts, case studies etc. Good level of self-reflection, but plenty of scope for development.	The student draws on a good range but range may be rather predictable. Good use of evidence. Good awareness of the limits of evidence.	A good standard of referencing, though a number of errors or inconsistencies may be present. Good bibliography but possibly containing technical errors, some minor, some more serious.	A good standard of written English, with only minor errors present

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Pass	55-59% Pass	Significant learning outcomes have been met satisfactorily. Some may have been met to a good standard. Demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the subject and some understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Standard of scholarship likely to be undermined by poor linkage of issues/themes, poor use of evidence, unsubstantiated claims etc.	A satisfactory standard achieved: mostly clear, some evidence of logical progression. Some minor inaccuracies. There may be a number of flaws in structure, some of them serious.	Methodology approach is basic but sound. It is under-developed and lacking in sophistication. Research tools employed are satisfactory but very basic. Data retrieved may be of limited, breadth, veracity or reliability. Only a basic awareness of issues associated with use of qualitative/quantitative data. Awareness of research ethics is mostly good.	Competent work, with evidence of engagement in the relevant issues, but little originality and only occasional insight. Gaps in understanding and knowledge; may not have addressed all aspects of the assignment.	Conscientious work and attentive to subject matter and/or task set, but balanced more towards a descriptive rather than a critical, analytical treatment.	Draws on a limited range of sources. Some assessment of evidence. Topics are mostly addressed but not always examined in sufficient detail. Some use of examples. Treatment of data or literature is basically sound but too narrow in scope and underdeveloped. Understanding of the limits of evidence not fully articulated or understood.	Referencing satisfactory on the whole, though some inconsistencies or instances of poor/limited citation may be present. Satisfactory bibliography but likely to reveal some weaknesses in composition and use of referencing conventions.	A reasonable standard of written English, though a number of errors may be present.
Pass	50-54% Pass	Significant learning outcomes have been met satisfactorily. Demonstrates a barely satisfactory understanding of the subject. Some understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards, but falls well short of the standard required for a Merit. Standard of scholarship likely to be undermined by poor linkage of issues/themes, poor use of evidence, unsubstantiated claims etc. Overall conception lacks ambition. A narrow pass in which there is plenty of scope for improvement.	A barely satisfactory standard achieved. Mostly clear, some evidence of logical progression. Some more significant inaccuracies. There may be a number of flaws in structure, some of them of a more fundamental nature. A narrow pass.	Methodological approach is barely adequate and flawed in some areas. Research tool simplistic and under-developed. Data may be of very limited breadth or reliability. Very little awareness of issues associated with use of qualitative/quantitative data. Awareness of research ethics only satisfactory – it narrowly meets the standard required for a Pass but this aspect of the project/dissertation reveals a limited engagement with the key issues.	Work shows some evidence of engagement in the relevant issues, but may be rather basic and unimaginative in its interpretation and argumentative purpose/focus. Little originality and only occasional insights. Gaps in understanding and knowledge; may not have addressed all aspects of the project/dissertation. A narrow pass.	Work is attentive to the subject matter and/or task set, but balanced mostly descriptive rather than critical or analytical in its approach. It may contain some useful observations, but insights offered are very limited in scope and sophistication. A narrow pass.	Barely satisfactory range of sources. Some assessment of evidence, but the latter may be simplistic and partial. Topics are mostly addressed but not always examined in sufficient detail. Some use of examples, but not necessarily well-chosen or employed. Treatment of data or literature is basically sound but too narrow in scope and underdeveloped. Some evidence of the limits of evidence, but these may not always be properly articulated or understood. A narrow pass.	Referencing barely satisfactory. A number of inconsistencies in citation may be present. Satisfactory bibliography but likely to reveal some serious weaknesses in composition and use of referencing conventions. A narrow pass.	A barely satisfactory standard of written English. A small number of serious errors may be present. A narrow pass.

Marks awarded in the range below indicate that the candidate has failed to achieve the standards required for a pass mark at Masters Level on this occasion. It is recommended that the student receiving marks in this range meet with their advisor (or the marker) to review the factors that may have influenced the mark and ways in which their performance might be enhanced in subsequent assessments.

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Work representing unsafe practice in professional Schools will be marked as a fail.

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Fail	40-49% Fail	Submission fails to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. Some understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards is present but lacks the sophistication required for a Pass. Standard of scholarship undermined by poorly constructed ideas, arguments, use of evidence, partial response to the question etc. There may be some evidence of reflection but it is partial and lacks insight expected at Masters level.	Submission fails to meet the presentational standard required for a Pass at Masters level. Some errors may be of a more serious nature. Work rushed to completion.	Methodological approach is unsound and flawed in too many areas. Research tools under-developed and/or inadequate. Data of insufficient breadth or reliability. Awareness of issues associated with use of qualitative/qualitative data appears to be minimal or non-existent. Poor awareness of research ethics.	Work shows some understanding of the topic and some relevant knowledge, but its treatment is basic, unimaginative and superficial and construction of arguments lacks the sophistication required of a Pass at Masters level. Grasp of key concepts is weak. Arguments employed are poorly evidenced and/or contain flaws.	Range of data and/or literature employed is very limited and too narrow to justify a Pass at Masters level. Over-reliance on material provided on Blackboard or in lectures/seminars.	Draws on a limited range of sources. Little attempt to assess evidence. Examples are provided but are poorly chosen or employed. Lacking in sophistication or finesse. The submission reflects a limited level of engagement in wider reading and a limited confidence/ability in the use of evidence. Limits of evidence very poorly articulated or understood. Submission lacks the evidential base required for a Pass at Masters level.	Citations may be present, but referencing is poor, suggesting that little effort has been made to follow guidance. Work is vulnerable to unwitting plagiarism. Bibliography inadequate. Many errors, some serious, revealing an insufficient awareness of mechanics of scholarship. Fails to conform to the standard required for a Pass.	Standard of written English fails to meet the standard required for a Pass at Masters level; a number of serious errors may be present; Poorly structured and written, with poor attention to vocabulary and grammar. The student should consider seeking additional support in the development of their written English.

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Fail	30-39% Fail	Insufficient demonstration of learning outcomes to justify a Pass grade. Understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards is not sufficient for a Pass. Standard of scholarship insufficient for a pass, with weaknesses in several areas. Limited evidence of reflection.	Poor standard, lacking sufficient clarity, and a logical progression, with serious errors/inaccuracies.	Methodological approach is unsound and flawed in too many areas. Research tools under-developed and/or inadequate. Data of insufficient breadth or reliability. Awareness of issues associated with use of qualitative/quantitative data appears to be minimal or non-existent. Very poor awareness of research ethics.	The submission contains some material of merit, but it is only a partial attempt to address the question and fails to answer the question fully or in a robust manner with few (and mostly unsuccessful) attempts to construct argument(s). Poor understanding of key issues or concepts.	The treatment is predominantly descriptive. Whilst the work contains some evidence of criticality or analysis, it is too limited or partial or lacking in depth to justify a pass.	Draws on a very limited range of sources. No real attempt to assess evidence. Examples are occasionally provided but are poorly chosen and employed. Entirely lacking in sophistication or finesse. The submission reflects a very limited level of engagement in wider reading and a limited confidence/ability in the choice and use of evidence.	Citations present but very limited. Referencing is very poor. Bibliography is omitted, partial or poorly structured. Guidance not followed. Poor referencing means work is highly vulnerable to unwitting plagiarism. Many serious errors, revealing very limited awareness of mechanics of scholarship.	Unsatisfactory standard of written English; too many serious errors present. Weaknesses undermine clarity of meaning. Text occasionally incomprehensible. Includes significant flaws in spelling, grammar, and basic sentence/paragraph composition. The student should consider seeking additional support in the development of their written English.
	Classification	Learning outcomes & scholarship	Presentation	Methodology	Argument & understanding	Criticality & analysis	Use of sources and evidence	Academic referencing	Written communication
Fail	20-29% Fail	One or two learning outcomes have been met in a limited way. Understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards is considerably below that required for a pass. Standard of scholarship insufficient for a pass, with weaknesses in many areas. Very limited evidence of reflection.	Very poor standard of presentation, lacking sufficient clarity, and a sufficiently logical progression, with many serious inaccuracies.	Dissertation reflects a very poor understanding of what a 'methodology' is. Approach is unsound and flawed at a fundamental level. Research tools under-developed and/or inadequate. Data minimal. Research ethics are mentioned but not examined/discussed.	Little material of merit or relevance, revealing a paucity of understanding of key issues or concepts. Fails to address most aspects of the task or question set. Work lacks any sustained argument(s).	The treatment is almost wholly descriptive. Contains little evidence of a critical or analytical engagement in the topic.	Draws on minimal range of sources. Rarely goes beyond paraphrasing bits of lecture notes or easily accessible web sources. No attempt to assess evidence. Examples are very rarely provided and those that are very poorly employed. Submission reflects a very limited level of engagement in study on a more general level.	Citation almost or entirely absent. Guidance largely ignored. Bibliography omitted or very poorly assembled. Poor referencing means work is highly vulnerable to unwitting plagiarism. Awareness of mechanics of scholarship very weak.	A poor standard of written English. All of the flaws mentioned above, but of an even more serious nature. The student should consider seeking additional support in the development of their written English.

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Fail	10-19% Fail	The work submitted will have very limited relevance to any of the stated learning outcomes. Understanding of link between theory and practice is very weak. Standard of scholarship insufficient for a pass, with weaknesses in all areas. Reflection almost entirely lacking.	Little evidence that any thought has been given to the standard of presentation. Many serious errors/inaccuracies.	Little understanding of 'methodology' is apparent. Approach is entirely unsound and seriously flawed at a fundamental level. Tools and data unreliable/unsound. No engagement with research ethics at all.	No material of merit or relevance, revealing a complete lack of understanding of key issues or concepts. Fails to address all aspects of the task or question set. No attempt to construct argument(s).	The treatment is wholly descriptive. Contains very little evidence of a critical or analytical engagement in the topic.	Almost complete absence of evidence. Submission reflects a very limited level of engagement in study on a more general level.	Citations absent. Guidance entirely ignored. No bibliography that could merit description as such. Very poor referencing. Highly vulnerable to unwitting plagiarism. Work shows no attempt to apply the mechanics of scholarship.	A very poor standard of written English throughout with little care taken in the composition of proper sentences or paragraphs. The student should consider seeking additional support in the development of their written English.
Fail	0-9% Fail	Lacks any understanding of learning outcomes. No understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Standard of scholarship very poor throughout. No evidence of reflection.	No evidence that any thought has been given to the standard of presentation.	Nothing that might be described as a 'methodology' is apparent. Total absence of proper research tools or usable data. No evidence that the student is even aware that research ethics exist.	No understanding is demonstrated. Arguments notable for their complete absence.	No evidence of criticality or analysis.	Evidence conspicuous by its complete absence. Submission reflects a very limited level of engagement in study on a more general level.	Citation entirely absent. Bibliography omitted. Highly vulnerable to unwitting plagiarism. Application of the mechanics of scholarship entirely absent.	Incomprehensible. No attempt to compose proper sentences or paragraphs. The student should consider seeking additional support in the development of their written English.