

Revised UEA Senate Scales 2012/3: Some Guidance on their Use

Summary

The new Senate Scales are different to the old one in several respects, but the most important are:

- Creating three separate bands within the 1st class range ('1st', 'high 1st' and 'exemplary 1st')
- Adjusting the language of the descriptors to ensure a better alignment with the classification bands.
- Inclusion of a 'signpost' at the pass/fail threshold –indicating that students gaining less than 40% should meet with their adviser or the marker to review the factors that might have resulted in a fail.

The new Senate Scales will be added to the LTS website and publicised to staff and students alike.

In the new Scales the 1st class category is divided into three separate bands: 1st (70-79%), High 1st (80-89%) and Exemplary 1st (90-100%). This should help academic colleagues to differentiate more easily between 1st class work of varying quality and reward scripts that conform to the descriptors for High 1st and Exemplary 1st with the very high marks they merit.

Implementation

All internal markers and moderators are expected to refer to the Senate Scales in order to ensure consistent standards across the four faculties. Colleagues are encouraged to provide feedback on their use and value to Associate Deans and Faculty LTQCs. In this way, the Scales will be kept under review and, if necessary, further revisions will be made to them in subsequent years in the light of feedback from colleagues.

The Marking Grids are aimed primarily at staff marking student assessments. They are intended to provide a guide which staff can refer to during the marking process. The descriptors are intended to help staff determine how well students have performed under a number of separate criteria which, for 'Coursework', include:

- Achievement of learning outcomes and level of scholarship
- Presentation
- Argument and understanding
- Critical analysis
- Use of sources and evidence
- Academic referencing
- Written Communication

If they wished to, staff could take these seven criteria and cut and paste them into a table, including weightings if helpful, such as in the example below:

Criterion	Weighting	Mark allocated
Achievement of learning outcomes and level of scholarship	20	13
Presentation	5	2
Argument and understanding	20	14
Critical analysis	20	12
Use of sources and evidence	20	10
Academic referencing	5	4
Written Communication	10	8
Total:	100%	63%

Alternatively they might use the criteria in the box above to provide a 'structure' to the feedback they provide to students. This could be added to existing feedback sheets:

Feedback Grid
<i>Achievement of learning outcomes and level of scholarship</i>
<i>Presentation</i>
<i>Argument and understanding</i>
<i>Critical analysis</i>
<i>Use of sources and evidence</i>
<i>Academic referencing</i>
<i>Written Communication</i>

Most schools already have well-designed feedback sheets that markers fill in when marking work. Some have a 'generic' feedback sheet which is used to mark all coursework. Some have separate feedback sheets designed around specific types of coursework/assessments. The intention is not that the new Senate Scales replace these existing feedback sheets – rather, the intention is that they inform the way that staff interpret the criteria required for a 1st, 2(i), 2(ii) etc.

Some points of clarification

1. We have a 100% marking scale at UEA. We should use 100% of the marks available, and not just the middle 30% between 40 and 70.
2. Each assignment should have clear learning outcomes so that students know what they are expected to achieve or demonstrate in their submitted work. There should be no 'opaque' criteria or unspoken qualities that a marker is looking for – criteria should be explicit.
3. If a student demonstrates achievement of all the learning outcomes to an exceptionally high standard, he or she should be awarded with a mark in the 90-100% range.
4. Failure to do well in relation to one learning outcome should not, in itself, necessarily preclude the award of a 1st class mark.
5. Penalising students disproportionately for weaknesses in grammar undermines notions of equality and fairness, especially in relation to students for whom English is not their first language.
6. Critical, constructive feedback is important for all students, including those operating in the 1st class range. Students who achieve marks over 70% often tend only to receive praise and positive feedback from markers.
7. Work should be marked for academic achievement using these criteria. Any penalty as a result of late submission or exceeding the word limit should be clearly indicated as a separate, penalised, mark on the coursework coversheet.
8. Suspected plagiarism should be investigated following the plagiarism and collusion regulations, and any resulting penalty applied transparently, following the procedure.