Assessing a piece of written work

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On the following pages you will find an anonymised, actual piece of written work. The question to be answered was

**The advent of electricity and of information technology are often referred to as the Second and Third Industrial Revolution. Choose one of these revolutions and compare and contrast its effects to that of the First Industrial Revolution (the one that you you’ve read about this term).**

This could be a question in a first year economics unit. Clearly the Industrial Revolution was a topic discussed in the unit (if you want a reference you could assume that students have read chapters 1 and 2 of The CORE Team’s (2017) “The Economy” and perhaps in particular [Section 2.6](https://core-econ.org/the-economy/book/text/02.html#26-the-british-industrial-revolution-and-incentives-for-new-technologies)).

You should assume that the maximum length for the written assignment was 400 words, so the assignment is inside the length requirement (app. 360 words).

Attached you will find the assessment criteria by the University of Manchester’s Economics Department. You should assess the written work with reference to these assessment criteria and use these to judge which class of grade you would give this piece of work.

Make sure that, before you read the assessment, you re-read the above question in order to identify the exact task given to the students. You may want to refer to [this document](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/understanding-task/story_content/external_files/instruction-words.pdf) (University of Manchester Library) to clarify the meaning of “Instruction Words”.

Reference

The CORE Team (2017). ‘Technology, Population, and Growths’. Unit 2 in The CORE Team, The Economy. Available at: http://www.core-econ.org. [Accessed on 13/6/2019].

# Assessment Criteria

These are from the Economics Department, The University of Manchester

**Very High First Class (90-100)**

Such answers are exceptional and *fully* answer the question demonstrating the attainment of all learning objectives and in adherence to all guidelines. The answer will be expected to show an exceptional level of achievement with respect to the following criteria:

* insight and depth of understanding of the material;
* the exercise of critical judgment along with clarity of analysis and of expression;
* comprehensiveness and accuracy;
* knowledge of the relevant literature;
* demonstration of elements of creative and independent thinking.

**High First Class (80-89)**

Such answers are outstandingand provide a *near-full* and well-structured answer to the question and can be expected to indicate an outstanding level of achievement of all of the following qualities:

* insight and depth of understanding of the material;
* the exercise of critical judgment along with clarity of analysis and of expression;
* comprehensiveness and accuracy;
* knowledge of the relevant literature.

**First Class (70-79)**

Such answers are excellentand provide a *largely*- *full* and well-structured answer to the question and can be expected to indicate excellence in *some or most of* the following qualities:

* insight and depth of understanding of the material;
* the exercise of critical judgment along with clarity of analysis and of expression;
* comprehensiveness and accuracy;
* knowledge of the relevant literature.

**Upper-second Class (60-69)**

Such answers are very good and provide a generally well-structured answer to the question and can be expected to indicate *some of* the following qualities:

* generally accurate and reasonably comprehensive understanding of the material;
* clarity of analysis, of argument and of expression;
* demonstrating a sound understanding of the relevant data;
* a demonstrable grasp of the important contributions of the relevant literature.
* some evidence of insight

**Lower-second Class (50-59)**

Such answers are good and provide a clear and substantially correct answer to the question. They can be expected to show *most of* the following features:

* generally firm understanding of the material; but with some omissions or errors
* clarity of analysis and argument, albeit limited in extent;
* some awareness of the relevant data and the relevant literature.
* Some elements of the answer may be irrelevant to the question asked

**Note**: What distinguishes a high Lower-second Class from a low Upper-second Class is greater extent of understanding of material and clarity of analysis and argument, as well as at least some selective knowledge of the relevant literature, not mere awareness of its existence. It should also demonstrate an ability to evaluate, where appropriate, the secondary sources used in writing the answer and should, where appropriate, offer evidence of an ability to evaluate empirical evidence.

**Third Class (40-49)**

Such answers are sufficient and demonstrate a *rudimentary* understanding of the issues and offer *only partial* answers to the question. They can be expected to show some of the following features:

* sparse coverage of the material with several key elements missing;
* unsupported assertions, possibly in note form and not supported by authority or evidence;
* a lack of clear analysis or argument;
* some major errors and inaccuracies.

**Fail (30-39)**

Such answers are insufficientand, while showing some awareness of the area, fail to deal with the question in a way that suggest more than a fragmented and shallow acquaintance with the subject. They are often error-prone, lacking in coherence, structure and evidence of independent thought. These answers typically:

* contain very little appropriate or accurate material;
* only cursorily cover the basic material;
* are poorly presented without development of arguments.

**Bad Fail (20-29)**

Such answers are inadequate and fail to demonstrate the ability to engage with the question. They demonstrate only the most basic awareness of the area and may contain important errors. They will be almost completely lacking in coherence, structure and evidence of independent thought.

**Very Bad Fail (10-19)**

Such answers are severely inadequate and exhibit an almost complete lack of engagement with the area or question.

On the following pages you can find a marked up version of the coursework and a commented version of the assessment criteria which should help you to understand how written pieces of work are assessed.

HOWEVER, if you really want to benefit from this exercise you should **first read the piece and try to assess it by yourself or together with fellow students without looking at the next pages**. Yes, it is hard and difficult, but unless you do this yourself you will not learn as much as you can. And after all, you are only looking at this document because you want to learn ….

… right?!

# Discussion of the submitted work

The key instruction words in the question were “compare” and “contrast”. From this University of Manchester Library document we understand that the instructions therefore ask us to

**Compare**: Look for similarities and differences between; perhaps conclude which is preferable; implies evaluation.

**Contrast**: Bring out the differences.

When judging the work we will have to judge it relative to these demands.

# Assessment Criteria applied to the submission

After reading the piece try and identify characteristics of the submission in these assessment criteria.

It is important to not fall in the trap of asking the student to have written a lot more. There was a word limit of 400 words which would have not given a lot of extra space.

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# Final Judgement

When assessing the submission against the marking criteria it becomes obvious that it has some elements of an upper-second class answer and certainly a substantial number attributes of a lower-second class answer. The problem is that the student wasn’t careful enough in addressing the main task of the task (compare and contrast). Failing to do so is the characteristic of a third class grade.

It is fairly easy to disagree here regarding the final judgement. A grade in the lower-second to third class region seems fair. The fact that it is well written and easy to read would help a marker to go for a grade in the low 50s. However, the problematic referencing and use of figures is not good practice and could make a marker decide that a lower-second grade cannot be justified.