

Marking of MSc dissertations

Examiners are asked to complete the mark sheet by providing a mark out of 20 and comments as appropriate for each of the following five aspects of the project: task undertaken, preparation, work done, critical evaluation and dissertation. They should add up the marks and complete the total box, adding any comments applicable to the total mark. The second page of the mark sheet is for general comments.

The grid below gives criteria for awarding marks in different ranges for each aspect.

	Fail (0 to 7)	Fail (8 to 9)	Pass (10 to 11)	Merit (12 to 15)	Distinction (16 to 20)
Task undertaken	The task undertaken is not suitable for a master's level project. (This should only occur if the candidate has not attempted to do what was initially agreed with his or her supervisor.)	The candidate has not succeeded in getting to grips with a master's level task.	The task undertaken is appropriate to a master's project; it involves either application of knowledge from the taught part of the course to a problem whose solution is not straightforward, or acquisition of substantial new knowledge from professional or academic literature.	As for a pass but requires a degree of creativity.	As for a pass but requires a significant amount of original thinking.
Preparation	There is little or no evidence that the candidate has made a serious effort to learn about the problem, previous work in the area or the availability of suitable tools.	The candidate's efforts to learn about the problem, previous work in the area or the availability of suitable tools have been insufficient to allow him or her to carry out the work to a suitable standard.	The candidate has studied the most obvious sources of information about the problem and the tools available for tackling it.	The candidate has studied a reasonable range of relevant sources of information including some that were not obvious and has been able to combine what has been learned into a sensible synthesis.	The candidate has demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the background to the task and of the appropriate tools. This will usually mean a survey of the appropriate academic or professional literature but, in the case of some professional projects, may be more concerned with problem analysis.

Work done	The work carried out is not commensurate with the time students are expected to spend on the project or has not been carried out competently.	The work has not been carried out competently in the main, though it may show some areas of competence.	The work has been carried out competently in the main, though it may show some areas of weakness. It is commensurate with the time students are expected to spend on the project.	As for a pass, but any areas of weakness are very minor. The work has been carried out systematically and with proper planning.	As for a merit but the work meets the standards expected of a professional in the software industry or is of a standard acceptable for presentation at a professional or academic conference.
Critical evaluation	The dissertation makes no serious attempt to evaluate the extent to which the aims and objectives of the project have been achieved nor does it seek to evaluate the appropriateness of the approach adopted.	The dissertation does not adequately evaluate the extent to which the aims and objectives of the project have been achieved.	The dissertation evaluates how far the work carried out meets the stated aims and objectives of the project.	As for a pass but, in addition, the suitability of the tools and methods used is critically evaluated and, where appropriate, the possibility of building further on the existing work is assessed.	As for a merit but the evaluation will be informed by thorough understanding of the problem and knowledge of other work described in the literature.
Dissertation	The dissertation fails to describe the work done or attempted.	The dissertation does not adequately describe what was done, nor does it properly explain why the approach used was selected.	The dissertation describes accurately what was done and explains why the approach used was selected. It may show some weakness in structure, presentation, use of English or understanding. It complies, in the spirit if not the letter, with the department's published guidelines for MSc dissertations.	As for a pass but any weaknesses of structure, presentation, etc., are comparatively minor. The dissertation shows an awareness of alternative approaches and demonstrates why the approach taken was selected.	As for a merit but the dissertation is written in a style appropriate to an academic dissertation. It reads well and is largely free of grammatical and typographical errors. Citations and references conform to good academic practice.