

HONOURS RESEARCH PROJECT MARKING GUIDELINES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the successful outcome of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Communicate knowledge and depth of understanding of their chosen topic of study. This includes the ability to formulate good research questions.
2. Critically evaluate and concisely summarize research literature relevant to their chosen topic of study.
3. Analyse data in order to address a research question. This can be qualitative or quantitative data, it can be analysis of original data or analysis of data previously collected by others. Interpret data appropriately, connecting this to the literature review and acknowledging limitations.
4. In the event the project involves new data collection, to understand ethical issues around conducting research in their chosen topic of study. If the project does not involve new data collection, understand ethical issues around secondary data use or analysis of publicly available data.

Length: Honours Research projects should not exceed 10,000 words of text, excluding appendices, and bibliographies. Recommended length is between 8-10,000 words. There should be no penalty for projects less than 8,000 words as long as they are fit for purpose (e.g. some experimental studies can be quite concise).

MARKING GUIDELINES

Although there is no single set criterion by which the research should be assessed, some guidelines to assist examiners on what areas their report should cover are provided as follows:

CLARITY OF PURPOSE & RESEARCH PROJECT FLOW

Comment on the clarity and cohesiveness of the research project objectives and aims and how well these are achieved.

- Identification of clear research aims, question(s), and/or hypotheses.
- The entire research project flows as a cohesive whole, from the introduction to the methods to the results and discussion, such that for the best projects, you feel like it could be published in an academic journal

CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH

Comment on the student's knowledge of the literature in the field of study and other relevant information, as appropriate for a 30 credit Honours research project.

- Distinction between (a) conceptual/theoretical and (b) empirical developments in the literature.
- Identification of strengths/weaknesses of previous research
- Review of current state of knowledge
- Links with the methodology for study

APPROPRIATE METHODS

Comment on the appropriateness of methodology to the research project and the competence with which it is used (within the scope of a 30 credit Honours project).

- Clear statement of methodology used and why
- Development follows a logical/systematic/scientific/discursive sequence
- Builds/draws on what has been done before (ie links with literature review, use of theoretical and empirical studies to set up hypothesis or research question)
- Understands strengths and weaknesses of methodology used

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTIVE CRITIQUES

Comment on the effectiveness of the outline, discussion and evaluation/analysis of data/results as an integrated whole for presenting a complete argument. Comment on the student's ability to identify and articulate conclusions from the research (including limitations).

- Meeting of objectives, solving of the problem, testing of hypotheses, addressing the research questions or aims posed in the introduction. Clear conclusions, implications; or well-constructed, well-referenced arguments explaining why there is a lack of clarity in the results, with appropriate implications.
- Ideas for further research

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Comment on how successful the student has been in the design and execution of the project and any particular strengths and weaknesses. Provide an opinion on the extent to which the research project makes a contribution to the literature it references, be it small or large. Make special comments if it represents new knowledge or useful grounds for application. Keep in mind this is in the context of a 30 credit research project.

EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

- Comment on the suitability of style, clarity and effectiveness of the presentation.
- Is the communication clear and concise? Does it set up interesting research questions given the state of the literature?
- Does the research project meet with all the requirements of the University?
- Does it meet acceptable standards of grammar and style?
- Is it adequately referenced, and are references correctly summarized?

The exact format of the study may also vary according to discipline and in accord with the type of argument put forward in the research project.

Examiners should not be constrained by these guidelines, and should feel free to make any constructive, pertinent remarks about the research project that they consider would be helpful to the student, and useful in making a judgement on the final mark for the project.

For students enrolled from 2017 onward

Mark range (%)	Grade
90-100	A+
85-89.99	A
80-84.99	A-
75-79.99	B+
70-74.99	B
65-69.99	B-
60-64.99	C+
55-59.99	C
50-54.99	C-
40-49.99	D
0-39.99	E

We request that Honours report markers return their examiner reports within 4-6 weeks of receiving the research report. We expect examiners' written reports to be brief and not exceed 2 A4 pages in length.