

SCMP GRADES/STANDARDS

Macquarie University awards grades in the following ranges. Below is a brief summary of what each grade may be taken to mean in the Division of Society, Culture, Media and Philosophy. It provides more information than the grade definitions supplied by the university, but is not inconsistent with them. The grade awarded for a particular assignment or activity in a unit is also broadly consistent with the following list. However, on-course grades are re-distributed and scaled when final unit results are determined. This means that a final grade may be adjusted up or down from the initial on-course results.

In this system, the Pass grade represents the normal grade for a student who has worked satisfactorily in a unit. Approximately half or more of students in a unit can expect a pass grade.

High Distinction (85%–100%)

Students gaining a HD show all the qualities of students earning a Distinction, but their work also shows originality and real initiative in approach, research or argument. HD students have usually gone beyond the question asked and the materials on the unit, to seek out new materials, reflect critically on issues or methodologies used in a certain discipline or to contrive daring styles of literary presentation. HD work shows no lapses in any field, whether interpretation, argument, research or presentation.

Distinction (75%–84%)

Distinction work shows all the qualities of Credit work, but shows evidence of initiative. The student will usually show they have a range of options at their disposal: there are a number of ways they can interpret the question, research the topic and organize their argument; and they are aware of the specificity of the methodology available. In other words, they will show an understanding of the approaches modelled in lectures and readings, and the ability to go beyond them. Within the choices they have made, they have presented a strong, considered, if not absolutely water-tight argument.

Credit (65%–74%)

Credit work will present an argument that shows a considered, planned, response to the issues and questions raised by a unit, and a well-informed engagement with unit material. Discipline based terminology and methodology will be clearly understood and applied. Credit students show evidence of thorough use of unit readings and lecture material. Credit essays show basic mastery of unit material and discipline specific methodology as modelled in lectures and readings. Literary presentation should show proper referencing, and proper structure, at a sentence, paragraph and overall strategic level. Students who consistently receive Credit grades and above are eligible to do Honours.

Pass (50%–64%)

The Pass grade is the grade most commonly awarded in a unit. A pass essay deals adequately with unit material; it understands key discipline-based terminology as it has been outlined in lectures and unit material. It shows a general or basic

understanding of discipline-based methodology, in a practical sense, but it would not usually reflect on methodological questions (unless that is the specific focus of the unit or task). It would be adequate in its literary presentation, conforming loosely to discursive writing conventions (using paragraphs etc.) showing some evidence of planning and structuring; some attempt at informed use of references would be expected. A pass essay at the lower level would probably be descriptive; at the higher level, it should show awareness of the need to be analytical and critical, though this might not have been brought off effectively. Research will not go beyond a basic, probably one-off reading of unit material.

Conceded Pass (45%–49%)

A PC essay would normally show awareness of the demands of the unit and the question, but not a knowledge of how to meet those demands. In other words, it might attempt to answer the question without a considered attempt at interpreting it. Its use of unit material will be mostly description and paraphrase, rather than analysis and argument. There will usually be obvious gaps in the student's knowledge of unit material. Literary presentation will usually be skimpy: there may be inadequate referencing, and the essay will probably read more like notes than like a structured argument. There will usually be no clear knowledge of the distinction between personal opinion, and substantiated argument. The PC is not really an adequate grade for continuing study in a discipline, and lecturers have the option to say in the Schedule of Units that a minimum grade of Pass is required in the prerequisites for their units.

Fail (less than 45%)

Work that has been failed usually shows disregard for the demands of the questions asked, the aims of the unit or the approach of the discipline. It shows little direct address to the question, minimal knowledge of unit material and little care as to preparation, research and presentation.