English Literature marking criteria

This is a streamlined version of the full marking criteria, which can be found on the departmental website. For each grade, a “plus” mark – A+, B+, etc – represents a further strengthening of the qualities indicated, while a “minus” grade – A-, B-, etc – indicates a lesser degree of these qualities.

A. Outstanding range and depth of attainment of intended learning outcomes, and an uncommonly strong grasp of the text and relevant issues. Discriminating command of a comprehensive range of relevant materials and analyses. Wide and adventurous critical reading, and impressive handling of critical and theoretical tools. Deployment of considered judgment relating to key issues, concepts and procedures; a rigorous and stylishly expressed argument, with some originality of thought and strong evidence of independent thinking. Excellent skills of planning and organisation; written with clarity, penetration and flair; very high presentational skills and accuracy, with precise referencing and scholarly apparatus.

B. Good attainment of virtually all intended learning outcomes, and a relevant and perceptive engagement with the topic. Close familiarity with a wide range of supporting evidence, and very sound researching and reading skills. Perceptive interpretation and evaluation of text(s), and skill at relating textual details to broader contextual or theoretical issues. A good depth of understanding with an overall coherent argument, and ability to synthesise a range of ideas. Only occasional errors of expression or gaps in argument. Good skills of planning and organisation, with accurate presentational and referencing skills. Fluently and clearly written, with only occasional spelling or presentational errors.

C. Competent attainment of most of the intended learning outcomes. Approach to texts mixes the descriptive and analytical, and readings of them tend to be conventional. Less assurance in supporting general argument by textual detail, and a circumscribed range of evidence only. Variable depth of understanding of concepts or theory, and some looseness in organising material or sustaining coherent argument. Reasonable planning and organisation, with evidence of researching and reading skills. But also recurrent spelling and presentational errors, inconsistent or incorrect referencing, and pedestrian writing.

D. Limited attainment of intended learning outcomes and some familiarity with primary material, but also misunderstanding of or irrelevance to the question; may be significantly underlength. Limited familiarity with a minimally sufficient range of materials; excessive generalisation, and description predominates over analysis; little secondary material or contextual reference. Some grasp of analytical issues and concepts, but serious deficiencies in organisation of material and weak argument. Generally poor presentation, including referencing, bibliography, style, spelling.

Fail (F1-F4). Descending degrees of: very limited attainment of learning outcomes; poor interpretation and analysis; little engagement with primary material and weak argumentation; serious presentational inadequacies across the board.