

Psychology Marking Criteria and Mark Scheme for Essay-style Questions

		ALL LEVELS			LEVEL 5-6	LEVEL 6
		(Desirable in other years)				
Grade	%	Evidence of comprehension	Breadth and depth of Knowledge	Irrelevant material or errors	Synthesis and balance	Originality and Innovation
A++	100	Outstanding; deep insight, more than expected at this level.	Outstanding: beyond what could be expected.	Contains no inaccuracies, or irrelevant material. APA formatting conventions strictly adhered to in coursework with no grammatical errors.	Outstanding selection. Beyond what would be expected at undergraduate level.	Original ideas and very insightful.
A+	92	Exceptional knowledge and understanding illustrated via logical, detailed and comprehensive presentation of relevant concepts/theories.	Excellent analysis and coherent evaluative interpretations of principal theories and concepts. Balanced and logical arguments presented together with a coherent and innovative summary/conclusion. Clear and extensive evidence of broad based reading.	Contains no inaccuracies, or irrelevant material. APA formatting conventions strictly adhered to in coursework with no grammatical errors.	Astute selection and juxtaposition, presenting widely evidenced and well evaluated arguments.	Strong evidence of creative interpretation.
A	83	Very good, broad-based knowledge and understanding shown of concepts/ theories and their limitations.	Very good analysis, showing sound insight into the main issues around the research presented. Coherent and relevant critical evaluation via logical arguments and good summary/conclusion.	No irrelevant material or errors. APA formatting conventions strictly adhered to in coursework with no grammatical errors.	Appropriate selection and combination. A logical flow of arguments, supporting/refuting research interpretations.	Very good evidence.
A-	74	Very good knowledge and understanding shown of the main concepts and theories and their limitations. Good evidence of broad-based reading.	Good analysis showing a good perception of the main issues presented. Coherent and relevant critical evaluation via logical arguments and valid conclusions reached.	Minimal irrelevant material. APA formatting conventions adhered to in coursework with no or minimal grammatical errors.	Appropriate selection and combination. Arguments flow logically, supporting interpretations of research presented.	Good evidence.
B+	68	Good knowledge and understanding of the main theories in this topic area, and how these have been developed.	Good analysis and perception of the main issues. Tending towards description but with some relevant critical evaluation of the evidence presented.	Minimal irrelevant material. APA formatting conventions strictly adhered to in coursework submissions. Minor errors in presentation. No or minimal grammatical or spelling errors.	Good analysis and perception of the main issues. Lacking in depth but with logical critical evaluation of the evidence presented.	Some.
B	65	A good understanding of the relevant theories presented within lectures, with a balanced essay structure.	Good perception of the main issues. Descriptive but comprehensive, providing additional evidence from core readings not provided in lectures.	Minimal irrelevant material. APA formatting conventions strictly adhered to in coursework submissions. Some minor errors and tangential material.	Well balanced essay but somewhat descriptive. Some attempt at relevant evaluation, with logical flow of arguments.	Limited.

B-	63	Sufficient to marshal an organised, direct response.	Some omissions of key points, but mostly accurate, with supporting evidence provided.	Some errors and tangential material. Minor errors in APA formatting in coursework. Minimal grammatical or spelling errors.	Inappropriate balance; partial synthesis, some attempt at evaluation shown, but overly descriptive in places.	Limited.
C+	58	Sufficient to show an understanding of the material presented in lectures.	A good attempt to focus on the question but with several key points omitted. Some, but limited supporting evidence.	Some errors and misunderstanding shown, with some tangential material.	Imbalanced showing an understanding of only some key points.	Very limited.
C	55	Sufficient for a logical presentation.	Only basic material included; several key points omitted, poor attempt at providing evidence.	Errors and tangential material included.	Imbalanced, lacking insight.	Minimal.
C-	53	Not a direct response, lacking an overall focus on the question.	Several omissions but some key points, very limited attempt at providing evidence.	Some errors and tangential material.	Minimal.	Minimal.
D+	48	Poorly organised, weak comprehension of fundamental information.	Basic relevant material, lacking in supporting evidence, but with one or two key points.	Some major factual errors and errors of comprehension; tangential material.	Minimal.	Very minimal.
D	45	Poor evidence of comprehension of main issues.	Major omissions; a few relevant points and facts, subjective.	Major factual errors; frequently irrelevant.	None.	None.
D-	43	Very poor comprehension shown of the main issues and poor organisation.	Very limited understanding shown of fundamental material.	Major factual errors, frequently irrelevant, containing subjective statements.	None.	None.
F+	37	Very poor comprehension and muddled organisation.	Question very poorly addressed, showing overall lack of understanding.	Major factual errors, mostly irrelevant with very subjective information provided.	None.	None.
F	27	Lacking comprehension of the question, muddled organisation.	One or two minor points correct.	Major errors and largely irrelevant material provided.	None.	None.
F-	17	Extremely poor evidence of understanding the material or the question asked.	No evidence of being better if longer.	Largely anecdotal information provided, and extensively irrelevant or wrong.	None.	None.
0	0	Nothing of relevance written.	Nothing of relevance written.	Nothing of relevance written.	None.	None.

Notes:

- This mark scheme applies to all work (including examinations) completed on or after 05/10/23.
- In order to qualify for an “A-grade” the work must meet most of the indicated criteria.
- Grade to % conversion: A++ = 100; A+ = 92; A = 83; A- = 74; B+ = 68; B = 65; B- = 63; C+ = 58; C = 55; C- = 53; D+ = 48; D = 45; D- = 43; F+ = 37; F = 27; F- = 17; 0 = 0

See further considerations on the next page.

The following will be taken into consideration when making an academic judgement on the work and awarding a grade and providing feedback:

1. The grade awarded will take into account the work as a whole. Although all five columns of the scheme are important, the judgement should be balanced as, for example, a brilliant essay that never really directly answers the question should not get an 'A' grade overall because 4 of the 5 columns would sit as an A. Similarly, brilliantly argued, but poorly presented essay would be considered better than a brilliantly presented, but poorly argued one.
2. Was the work completed in a limited time (e.g., a timed exam or lab practical over a few hours) or did the student have days or weeks to complete the work? This would especially affect presentation, but also issues like referencing and structure. Less emphasis should be placed on areas like these if the work was completed in a limited time.
3. The level at which the student is working. We expect generally better material at higher levels (5 and 6) than lower ones (3 and 4). This is especially true of Synthesis and Balance which are expected to develop in higher levels, and Academic Best Practice where we are more forgiving at lower levels. In short, work that is considered an excellent A or A+ grade essay for level 4, would not get this grade at level 6.
4. There is a key threshold to cross in order to receive 'A' grades (first class). This must go above the material taught to students and show at least some evidence of original thought and deep understanding and knowledge.
5. There is a key threshold to pass in order to receive a pass mark of 'D-' or above (>40%). The work must demonstrate enough understanding and knowledge to meet the learning outcomes of the assignment and pass which are not outweighed by other deficiencies in the work.
6. Students are responsible for demonstrating evidence of outside reading and identifying sources of information used in the work. This may be formal in-text citations and a reference list at the end of the work if it is coursework, or something more like 'a recent student by scientists on gene 475 in a mouse model found...' on for example timed essays, depending on the context.
7. There is no fixed penalty for going over a given word count or similar limit, but academic staff will stop reading once the word count is reached. This will impact how the work is then evaluated against the marking criteria. Likewise, there is no fixed penalty for going under a given word count, but it might impact how the work will be evaluated against the marking criteria.
8. Only the values given here should be given to students as marks for their work (i.e., if an 'D-' grade is awarded this is 43%, it is not any value from 37% to 45%). Exceptions can occur to this if there are e.g., late penalties applied.