



# Understanding marking criteria: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/e7wnocHwx>

## Transcript

**Introduction:** Welcome to this tutorial on understanding marking criteria, from the University of Reading's Study Advice team. The tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace, and you can pause it at any time.

**Slide 1:** Everyone wants to get the best possible mark for their work.

**Slide 2:** You will probably have heard your tutors talk about marking criteria. But what do they mean? And, most importantly, how are you going to use them to help you get the marks your work deserves?

**Slide 3:** The marking criteria can be found on the Exams section of the University website. They will also be in your course handbook or on Blackboard. They list the attributes your work needs to demonstrate in order to achieve marks within a certain range. Your marker will refer to them when they mark your work.

**Slide 4:** Each of these ranges represents a degree class. So marks in the range:

- 40-49 are Third Class work,
- 50-59 are Lower Second Class or 2.2,
- 60-69 are Upper Second Class or 2.1,
- and 70-100 are classified as First Class.

This mark scheme may feel quite different to what you have been used to at school or college. You may be disappointed to get a mark in the 50s or 60s, but these are perfectly respectable Second Class marks. Of course though, you will want to get even better marks, and this is where understanding the criteria can help. In this tutorial we will be looking at the overall marking criteria for the University. But do note that each department will need to interpret these differently, depending on the kind of assignments you are producing, and the research materials you are using.

**Slide 5:** Here's an example of the guidelines in Classics. If you compare them to the general University criteria, you can see how they refer specifically to the kind of sources used in Classics. You should be able to find the guidelines for your own subject in your Course Handbook on Blackboard.

**Slide 6:** So now let's look more closely at the marking criteria. We're going to focus on what you would need to do to get a First Class mark, using the University wide criteria as a guide. Let's start from the top.

**Slide 7:** So this criteria refers to relevance, and this is talking about the assignment question or title.

Have you interpreted it correctly, and have you kept your discussion focused on what it asks you to do?

Do you have any 'added extras' – those bits you couldn't resist adding in, even though they're not really relevant to what you wanted to say? If so, you will need to take them out – they will make your marker think you weren't confident about your understanding.

**Slide 8:** This criteria asks you to have a grasp of the standard literature, and/or methods and techniques: that is, the sort of things that you have been referred to in your reading list or those that have been taught to you through lectures and lab sessions. You are required to understand it, not just to have read it.

You should also make sure that you don't rely on one or two resources or techniques too heavily.

**Slide 9:** To get the really good marks, you have to go beyond the reading list.

Find out how to search for books and journals on your subject – if you look on the Library website you will find guides and training.

**Slide 10:** In this criteria, the word 'selection' is really important.

We are not looking for you to tell us absolutely everything you have found out about your topic.

We want you to demonstrate your understanding by selecting a few appropriate things and discussing them in depth.

**Slide 11:** Academic study is largely about showing how theory and evidence can be integrated. How theories and principles work in practice – we want to know how examples can be interpreted using theories and how theories can be better understood by seeing how they work in examples. In your writing you need to keep showing how the two fit together.

Make sure that your discussion is carefully organised and structured to make your argument fluent and coherent.

**Slide 12:** Being a scholar is like any other profession – you have to understand and be able to put into practice the conventions of that role. So being scholarly means knowing how to research, how to use evidence to support your discussion, and how to be critical about your topic.

It also means knowing how to use referencing correctly so that you can acknowledge your debt to previous scholars.

**Slide 13:** Being analytical or critical doesn't mean finding things wrong with your work. It means thinking about how things work. For instance:  
How does this finding or statement or piece of evidence from your reading help us to understand the topic or question?

How does it compare to other findings or statements or evidence?

Are there any limitations on its value or reliability? These are the kind of things that will show you are thinking critically and analytically.

**Slide 14:** Your conclusions should naturally follow from the discussion and evidence you presented in your work. That's why we always say that there should be no new material in your conclusions. Make sure you draw them out explicitly and have explained why they are justified.

**Slide 15:** Accuracy is essential in academic work – you are trying to make the best possible case for what you want to say, so you don't want to give your reader any chance to contradict you. So you must be careful and meticulous in the facts you present and the statements that you make. You also need to be accurate in the language that you use and the way that you acknowledge other people's work.

**Slide 16:** Clarity is very important in academic writing. If your writing isn't clear, your reader will not be able to understand your arguments, so they may not get the marks they deserve. This is especially important when you are communicating at a much more sophisticated and complex level as you are in academic work.

You do need to write formally, but you will not make your work look academic by using long words or phrases. You should be using the most appropriate words – which may sometimes be technical terms – but do make sure you understand a word before you use it. If you need to link phrases in a sentence to convey a complex idea, make sure you know how to use punctuation correctly to separate them so that it's possible for your reader to understand what you are saying.

**Slide 17:** These final criteria all relate to independent critical thinking – that is, to developing your own ideas and views about your topic, grounded in what you have learnt from your lectures, your research and your reading. If you have built this strong foundation of knowledge and understanding, you will be able to use it as a jumping-off point for your own independent ideas.

**Summary:** This close look at the marking criteria has focused on the section describing what is needed for a First Class mark. You can see the criteria that are applied to lower marks by reading through all of the sections. These can be found on the Exams website. Or check your course handbook or Blackboard.

Understanding what markers are looking for can help you to improve your marks. So, now it's up to you to apply them to your work - and achieve the success you deserve.