

Grading Guidelines: FIL4405/2405

Dr. Neil Barton
neil.barton@uni-konstanz.de

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1 Disclaimers

Credit to original sources. These marking guidelines have been adapted (with fairly minimal changes based on the UiO grading guidelines¹) from the University of Edinburgh guidelines for undergraduate work, see:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/ppls/philosophy/current/undergraduate/assessment/markings-guidelines>.

What these marking guidelines can tell you (and more importantly, what they can't).

1. Guidelines are *guidelines*. Marking still requires discretion and judgment. You might feel that the paper more accurately falls in a higher/lower category than the mark you received.
2. Each set of guidelines should be understood not as providing necessary and sufficient conditions for a mark in the band specified. Rather, the guidelines under each band provide a kind of “cluster” which defines a paradigm of a piece of work falling within the band in question. Therefore, a piece of work might deviate from the paradigm in certain respects but still fall within the band. It might help to explain the idea of a paradigm being invoked here.

By way of comparison, an ornamental chair (as one might find in a museum, and that is not fit for sitting on) is a less paradigmatic

¹See <https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidsstotte/sta/enheter/hf/eksamen/sensur/sensorveiledninger/grading-guidelines.html>.

instance of a piece of furniture than an ordinary sofa, but plausibly an ornamental chair still counts as a piece of furniture all the same.

This is because it satisfies enough of the criteria in the cluster of concepts associated with being a piece of furniture, though it satisfies fewer of those criteria than an ordinary sofa. Similarly, a piece of work might be a less than fully paradigmatic instance of a C but still count as a C all the same.

3. Although they are written in a way that might naturally suggest a binary reading, satisfying each of them comes in degrees, and is not all or nothing. This is important, and relevant to the “paradigm” point above, in that doing better with respect to one criteria under a given band could offset doing slightly less well with regards to another. Also, precisely where within the band a piece of work is assessed will typically reflect how well the work does in terms of each of these criteria.

As mere guidelines, these provide only a sort of ‘default setting’ rather than a one size fits all set of prescriptions, amenable to only one canonical interpretation.

2 Base requirements for essays

- The mark for the course will be based on two 5-page essays.
- Essays should not be in a font smaller than 11 pt.
- Margins should not be smaller than 1 inch.
- Final versions of both essays must be submitted by 9 May at 2pm.

3 Course specific points

- The course is on the philosophy of mathematics, logic, and mathematical philosophy, accordingly essays should fall within this area.
- Essays should address sufficiently different topics from one another as to constitute separate pieces of work (one should not be a continuation of the other).

- Essays should be self-contained, and not ineliminably refer to the other.
- Students unsure about any of these points should check with the course leader (Dr. Neil Barton).

4 General guidelines

Under each of these headings are questions you should be asking yourself when undertaking philosophical writing.

Clarity.

- Is the writing clear?
- Is the language used appropriate?

Structure.

- Is a clear thesis or position stated?
- Is an argument, or arguments, offered in support of the thesis?
- Does each part of the essay/exam have a clearly indicated purpose?

Understanding.

- Is a sound understanding of relevant issues demonstrated?
- Is the exposition of others' views accurate?
- Are technical terms adequately defined?

Originality.

- Is there evidence of independent thought? (e.g. examples aren't just regurgitated, the argument develops extant positions in the literature rather than just explaining them).
- Is there critical engagement with the material?

Argument.

- Is the argument convincing?
- Are the inferences valid?
- Are obvious objections anticipated?

Further remarks. I do not want to stifle creativity in style. *However*, it should be clear that certain stylistic choices are inherently *riskier*. I have seen excellent dialogue-form essays, but the percentage which receive high marks is much lower than ordinary essays with a standard style. For example, it's just harder to make the structure clear from the outset with certain styles (like dialogues).

5 Grade Bands

I include grade bands from other countries, as some students may find this helpful (e.g. those on Erasmus programmes).

(90-100) Norwegian: A, British: High First Class, German: 1.0.

- Writing is extremely clear, concise, and engaging - of a publishable quality.
- The essay's structure is extremely clear and well-defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas of other philosophers in a way that shows they have 'made them their own', but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.
- A highly original and well developed line of argument and/or novel view, such that the essay is publishable.
- The author considers the most important objections to his/her arguments/views. The replies are generally convincing and subtle. If space allows, less obvious objections may also be discussed in interesting ways.

(80-89) Norwegian: A, British: Mid-First Class, German: 1.0.

- Writing is crystal clear and highly engaging throughout.
- Memorable examples are used to underscore key points.
- The writing is concise without coming across as terse or stilted.
- The essay's structure is clear and well defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas of other philosophers in a way that shows they have 'made them their own', but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.
- Very original thought, above and beyond what we would normally expect from an undergraduate. These original ideas will be developed in great detail (given space considerations).
- The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with their original argument(s) and has prima facie convincing rejoinders. Author may also consider more subtle objections to their argument(s)/view(s).

(70-79) Norwegian: A/B, British: Low first-class, German: 1.3

- Writing is very clear and engaging throughout. Where examples are used they are both relevant and memorable. The writing will also be concise.
- The essay's structure is not only clear and well defined; it also provides a satisfying narrative arc.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of the key concepts.
- Explains other philosopher's ideas in the author's own terms, clearly presenting those ideas in a way that indicates that the author has 'made them their own'.
- Where technical terms are used they are always carefully defined.
- Highly original thought, with well developed arguments.

- The exegesis will generally be sufficiently concise as to allow the author to develop his or her own arguments in considerable detail.
- The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with their original argument(s) and has interesting things to say about them.

(65-69) Norwegian: B, British: High Upper Second Class, German: 1.7.

- A thesis/position is indicated and clearly defined.
- Arguments are given with relatively clear structure.
- It is generally clear what is going on in each section, why one section follows on from the previous one, and how the essay as a whole hangs together.
- Demonstrates a solid understanding of the key concepts, and the exposition is generally accurate and thorough.
- Substantial evidence of original thought—either an original argument of some kind for a familiar position or an original argument for a novel position. In either case, the argument should be reasonably well developed.

(60-65) Norwegian: B/C, British: Low Upper Second Class, German: 2.0.

- All the properties of a High Upper Second, but whilst the author's original arguments are interesting and promising, fairly central or glaring problems with the argument are not discussed or addressed in any way, or are given only a highly cursory treatment.

(55-59) Norwegian: C, British: High Lower Second Class, German: 2.3/2.7

- A thesis/position is indicated but not clearly defined.
- Some arguments given, but their structure often unclear.
- Demonstrates a basic grasp of key concepts, but occasional inaccuracies in exposition/explanation.

- Little evidence of independent thought. Some suggestion of original ideas, but these are under-developed and/or expressed unclearly.
- Arguments generally weak or unconvincing.

(50-55) Norwegian: D, British: Low Lower Second Class, German: 2.7/3.0.

- Writing is generally unclear.
- Neglects clearly to state a thesis or position and/or fails to support this with arguments.
- Contains irrelevant material, or material whose relevance is not adequately explained.
- Demonstrates some basic understanding of central issues.
- Contains several errors in exposition or in explanation of concepts.
- Little to no evidence of independent thought or critical engagement.
- Merely rehashes arguments from readings or lectures.
- Where arguments are given, these are weak, depend on invalid inferences or implausible premises.
- Fails to anticipate obvious objections.

(40-50) Norwegian: E, Britain: Third, German: 4.0.

- The work makes some points relevant to the topic, but...
- does not demonstrate a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding.
- utilises only limited reference sources and offers poor analysis of them
- may not adequately address the area in question, because its content is too limited or because there are some inaccuracies
- presents a poorly structured, poorly developed, or frequently incoherent argument, or little argument at all

- has an awkward writing style or poor expression of ideas
- has incomplete or inadequately presented references

(40 and below) Norwegian: F, British: Fail, German 5.0.

- The work is very weak or shows a decided lack of effort. It...
- displays very poor or confused knowledge and understanding
- does not address the area in question.
- presents no argument or one based on irrelevant and erroneous content
- displays an unacceptable academic writing style and /or presentation
- has incomplete or inadequately presented references, if any