General assessment guidelines for

**ENG4118: Relevance theory: language, communication and cognition**

Reading

*The textbook is:*


*In addition, students are required to read a selection of papers and book chapters made available on Canvas. Only the obligatory reading is listed here (in the order encountered on the course):*


Learning outcomes

The exam (portfolio) tests the following learning outcomes as specified in the course description (https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ilos/ENG4118/):

**ENG4188**

After completing this course you will:

- have extensive knowledge of relevance theory’s account of communication
- be familiar with the intellectual background of relevance theory, in particular Grice’s work on meaning and on conversation
- have deep insight into the distinction between encoded meaning and what is communicated
- have deep insight into the explicit/implicit distinction in communication
- have extensive experience in analysing utterances in the terms of relevance theory
- know how to apply the concepts of the theory to various types of language use such as metaphor and irony
- be able to set out and discuss arguments and evidence for relevance theory’s key claims

Assessment guidelines

The portfolio gives the students a chance to show their depth of knowledge of their chosen subtopics, in work which can be aimed at demonstrating their grasp of the detail of the theory and arguments in its favour, and/or the degree to which they are able to apply relevance theory to concrete cases or examples.

Subtopics on which students can work include, but are not limited to:

- Grice’s views on speaker meaning;
- Grice’s theory of conversation;
- The principles of relevance;
- The distinction between sentence and utterance meaning;
- Implicatures;
- Explicatures;
- Literal and figurative use, including metaphor and irony.

The quality of the candidates’ own written academic English is also assessed, as is the structure of the term paper. The term paper must comply with the rules for correct use of sources and citations.

Grades are awarded according to the national qualitative descriptions of letter grades (https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/grading-system/index.html):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>General, qualitative description of evaluation criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.</td>
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</table>
The work is a portfolio, composed of at least two mini-essays (‘components’), each of which may be either primarily an analysis of certain data or a theoretical essay. Each of the pieces of work in the portfolio may be self-contained, or they may make reference to and/or build on each other.

The following criteria apply:

The portfolio will be assessed as a whole, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect. Instead, the examiner(s) will be making a judgement of the quality of the portfolio as a whole. Weaknesses in one part of the portfolio or in one area of the criteria may be compensated for by particular skill in another.

Very good (A or B):

1. Work at the highest levels will assert an argument and/or analysis. If an argument, then it will be carried out through the use of a thesis statement which is argumentative (i.e. it could also be disputed), specific (it is not overly general or vague) and substantiated (there is evidence to support it). An primarily analytic portfolio component will clearly show how the theoretical tool(s) chosen can account for features of the examples/data chosen. It will also take a critical approach to theory of the phenomena, e.g. by contrasting the coverage of different theories, by pointing out problems that a theory has in accounting for phenomena, or by pointing out ways in which a theory achieves broader coverage, or theoretical unification, or is parsimonious.
2. Each portfolio component will offer a sense of why the topic in question is significant, and the implications of the argument being made, or the type of analysis being provided.
3. The argument or analysis is delivered through the use of a clear, logical structure. The student considers the flow of the argument from paragraph to paragraph and sustains the argument/analysis throughout. The various points made are all relevant to the topic under consideration in the portfolio component, and that relevance is made explicitly clear.
4. Each portfolio component engages in a detailed way with academic literature.
5. The essay is written in formal English of a high standard, with no mistakes of grammar or spelling and in a suitable register for academic work. It adopts an objective, but persuasive academic tone which reinforces the argument that the student is making.
6. The portfolio references academic literature in a correct and consistent format, with complete footnotes/in-text references and bibliography.

Good (C):

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking.</td>
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1. Each portfolio component includes argument or analysis, which is for the most part sustained throughout.
2. Each portfolio component adopts a clear structure and the points made are relevant to the topic under consideration throughout.
3. The portfolio attempts to engage with theoretical work, but may not build on or challenge it to a great extent.
4. The portfolio is written for the most part in correct English, with only minor mistakes of grammar or spelling.
5. The references and bibliography are, for the most part, correctly formatted and sufficiently detailed.

Poor (D or E):

1. The argument or analysis is excessively general or lacks substantiating evidence.
2. The structure lacks logic, and the points made are occasionally irrelevant to the topic and argument under consideration.
3. The portfolio engages in some analysis. It makes only occasional use of examples.
4. The portfolio does not engage with relevant academic literature to a significant degree.
5. There are errors in grammar and spelling, though these do not prevent understanding of the essay text.
6. The bibliography and references are incorrectly formatted or lack essential information.

Unacceptable (F):

1. Portfolio components lack an argument and do not provide an analysis.
2. The structure is illogical and confusing. The points made lack relevance.
3. The essay makes little or no use of sources.
4. The essay is poorly written with numerous errors of grammar and spelling. The tone may be excessively colloquial.
5. The bibliography and references are non-existent or incomplete.