

# The School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Nottingham

## Guidelines for Marking MSc by Research/MRes Dissertations

---

### **Marks $\geq$ 70%: "Distinction"**

Marks of 70% or greater must reflect overall excellent work at the very upper end of performance.

The dissertation should be excellent in range, structure, command of issues covered and arguments presented. Dissertations awarded marks within this range would also be expected to demonstrate many of the following characteristics:

- a) a comprehensive and authoritative background to the project;
- b) a high level of understanding and critical evaluation of the arguments and concepts;
- c) a high level of quality experimental data (or equivalent) which is appropriately analysed;
- d) a presentation which is stylish, sophisticated, and which may be original or unorthodox;
- e) be of a level which may be suitable for publication

### **Marks 60-69%: "Merit"**

Marks of 60-69% should reflect dissertations which demonstrate a good broad-based knowledge of the topic and be clearly presented, argued and focussed.

The dissertation should be broad in range, structure and have a good command of issues covered and arguments presented. Dissertations awarded marks within the lower end of this range might contain a few conceptual errors or omissions of detail, whereas higher marks would be expected to demonstrate many of the following:

- a) a broad based knowledge of the project background;
- b) a thorough understanding and evaluation of key arguments and concepts;
- c) good experimental data (or equivalent), which is appropriately analysed;
- d) a high quality presentation which is well structured and clear;
- e) some level of originality, with aspects which may be at a level suitable for publication

### **Marks 50-59%: "Pass"**

Marks of 50-59% will be awarded for dissertations which are adequate, but may be weak in coverage, focus or demonstrate weakness in understanding.

The work may be weakly focussed and/or contain some conceptual errors or omissions of detail. Dissertations awarded marks within the higher range may only contain a small number of such errors/omissions, whereas lower marks will demonstrate many of the following:

- a) a poor coverage of the relevant research material, with important omissions and conceptual errors
- b) a failure to pay full regard to the relevant literature, place the work in context or draw appropriate conclusions;
- c) sound experimental data (or equivalent), but which may be inappropriately analysed/presented;
- d) a structure which is hard to follow with poor or little consideration of the underlying principles;
- e) a presentation demonstrating a lack of attention to detail e.g. inconsistencies in writing style and presentation, errors in the figures etc.

### **Marks $\leq$ 49%: "Fail"**

Dissertations in this range may show some knowledge of the topic, but with serious deficiencies in understanding and coverage. This will include work which misses the point of the project and lacks focus.

The work will lack focus and will demonstrate some of the following characteristics:

- a) an insufficient account of the background literature;
- b) be inadequately detailed with no critical understanding and show serious omissions and/or errors;
- c) a low level of experimental data (or equivalent), which is inappropriately analysed/presented
- d) a poor structure and presentation style, with a considerable lack of attention to detail.