

Grading of exams at MF (Guidelines)

This document will clarify which criteria are to be followed when **grading exams at MF**. The goal is to make it clear to the students what is expected of them in their exam answers, and to secure a uniform evaluation by the graders.

How much weight should be placed on the different criteria will depend on the type of examination in question (school exam, home exam, essay, oral exam etc.) and how the exam question is formulated. The weighting of the criteria is also dependent upon the learning outcomes stipulated in the course description.

Language

The exam should follow established norms for orthography and sentence structure. This criterion is especially important regarding home exams and essays. The exam should display clear and straightforward language.

Structure

The content of the exam should be presented in a structured manner, with clear connections between introduction, body, and conclusion.

Research question/topic of discussion

The candidate should be able to formulate and discuss relevant research questions or topics of discussion, and the exam should clearly present and/or discuss one or more questions or topics. These should be formulated in a clear manner and should be placed in a larger context. If an explicit exam question is given, it should be elaborated upon. Research questions formulated by the candidate should be clarified and explained.

Technical terminology

The candidate should display mastery of relevant general and subject-specific technical terminology and should be able to use such terminology in a precise manner.

Knowledge

The candidate should demonstrate knowledge gained from relevant academic literature. The candidate should be able to present and discuss relevant theories and perspectives, demonstrate academic insight in the form of both overview and detailed knowledge, and place such knowledge in a larger context.

Analysis/Discussion

The candidate should be able to reason and argue in a critical manner in order to present and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in relevant theories and interpretations. The candidate should be able to critically discuss various standpoints by asking questions in a nuanced and precise manner, pointing out the possibilities and limitations of the different standpoints, and suggesting possible interpretations and answers.

Method

The candidate should be able to give an account of relevant procedures and methods, and demonstrate an ability to reflect on these.

Formal demands

The exam must clearly show which question the candidate is answering. The candidate must clearly differentiate between arguments and contributions from others, on the one hand, and his or her own arguments, analyses, and perspectives, on the other. On a home exam or essay, the candidate should use relevant sources and refer to these correctly. (See MF's Guidelines for essay writing). Failure to refer properly can lead to an accusation of plagiarism.

Independence

The candidate should be clearly present in the exam with his or her own voice, formulating his or her own questions, perspectives, and/or conclusions. The candidate should give the exam a focus and a direction, based on the given exam formulation/question. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to present perspectives and theories from academic texts in his or her own words, clarifying how these are relevant with regards to the exam question that the candidate is answering.

The list of criteria is not exhaustive. The graders can together decide to use further criteria where relevant.

Supplementary criteria for grading

- The external grader should normally be the first to suggest a grade when two graders are cooperating in a grading committee, and the external grader's evaluation should be given greatest weight.
- It is not a goal to strive for a "normal distribution"/"Gauss curve" when grading exams in any given course.
- Elements in an exam answer that are not relevant to the question being asked, are to count negatively towards the candidate's grade. To what degree is up to the graders to decide.
- If the candidate is to answer two questions on one exam, and one answer is given an F, the candidate can still pass if the other answer is given a high enough grade.
- If the candidate is to answer more than two questions, a majority of the answers should normally qualify to a passing grade in order for the candidate to receive an overall passing grade.
- If the course description stipulates a word count with an upper and lower limit, it is up to the graders to decide if the grade will be lowered, and to what extent, when these limits are breached.
- It is only the final product that is to be evaluated, not the process. This is especially relevant where one of the graders of an exam/essay has been the supervisor for the candidate. Whether or not the student has made great or little progress in the course of writing is irrelevant to the grading of the final product.
- If the exam answer is extremely short, it is to be given an F. The grade F can also be given in instances where relevant academic standards and ethical guidelines are breached.

Grade descriptions

The grading system at MF follows the national standards formulated by *Universities Norway (UHR)*, a cooperative body for 33 accredited universities and university colleges in Norway. The descriptions formulated by UHR (in cursive below) are to underlie the evaluation of the criteria formulated above. The detailed descriptions following the cursive text are “ideal types”, but are not meant to be exhaustive.

A. Excellent

An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a very high degree of independent thinking.

The exam answer demonstrates excellent knowledge of the subject and shows that the candidate has both an overview and precise detailed knowledge. This knowledge is throughout the exam made relevant in the form of fruitful questions that are raised and discussed in an excellent manner. The exam answer demonstrates that the candidate has very good analytical skills. The candidate has excellent mastery of both general and subject-specific academic terminology. The exam answer is thoroughly characterized by reasoning, not only rote learning. The exam answer is very clear and well structured, and shows excellent methodological and theoretical reflection. The exam answer is excellent in all relevant areas and has no important lacunae or errors.

Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper is excellent in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).

B. Very good

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.

The exam answer demonstrates good knowledge of the subject and shows that the candidate has both an overview and precise detailed knowledge. This knowledge is made relevant in the form of fruitful questions that are raised and discussed in a good manner. The exam answer demonstrates that the candidate has good analytical skills. The candidate has good mastery of both general and subject-specific academic terminology. The exam answer is characterized by reasoning, not only rote learning. The exam answer is clear and well structured, and shows good methodological and theoretical reflection. The exam answer is very good in all relevant areas and has no important lacunae or errors.

Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper is very good in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).

C. Good

A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.

The exam answer demonstrates quite good knowledge of the subject, but it tends at times to be either too vague and general, or to focus on details without placing them in a larger context. The exam answer demonstrates the ability to raise and discuss questions. The candidate masters some general and subject-specific academic terminology. The exam answer is to a certain extent characterized by reasoning, but also by rote learning. The exam answer demonstrates some analytical skills and methodological and theoretical reflection. The exam answer is good in some of the most important areas but can have certain lacunae or errors.

Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper is good in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).

D. Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking

The exam answer covers the most important knowledge areas of the subject, but has some lacunae. It tends to be either too vague and general, or to focus on details without placing them in a larger context. The exam answer demonstrates some ability to raise and discuss questions. The candidate's mastery of general and subject-specific academic terminology is weak, although some terminology is used. The exam answer is characterized more by rote learning than by reasoning. The exam answer only slightly demonstrates analytical skills and methodological and theoretical reflection. The exam answer is satisfactory in some of the most important areas but has clear lacunae and/or errors. Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper might have clear weaknesses in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).

E. Sufficient

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.

The exam answer covers the bare minimum of knowledge areas of the subject, but has lacunae. The exam answer demonstrates little ability to raise and discuss questions. The exam answer demonstrates a minimum of analytical skills and methodological and theoretical reflection. The exam answer is characterized by rote learning, and the candidate's mastery of general and subject-specific academic terminology is weak. The exam answer is very weak, but sufficient in enough of the most important areas.

The grade E can also be given when a candidate demonstrates a clear breach of academic standards and ethical norms, even if the exam answer in other aspects is good.

Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper might have clear weaknesses in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).

F. Fail

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking

The exam answer either gives an unreasonable or incorrect interpretation of what the exam is asking, or has so many lacunae and/or errors that the candidate cannot be said to have sufficient knowledge or skills in the subject area. The candidate demonstrates insufficient ability to raise and discuss questions and to analyze. Methodological and theoretical reflection and the mastery of general and subject-specific academic terminology are insufficient.

The grade F can also be given when a candidate demonstrates a clear breach of academic standards and ethical norms.

Additional criterion regarding home exams/essays: The submitted paper is clearly insufficient in its use of sources (source selection, citation and referencing of sources, and independent use of sources).