Grading Scheme Glossary

The following definitions are presented to support users of QAA's Grading Scheme and provide clarity about terms used with regards to the Grading Standards.

Terms that apply to all Grading Standards

Assessment criteria
Descriptions of the requirements a student is expected to meet in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.

Consistently
Work will have few (if any) errors or areas requiring further development. The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria will be met and, on balance, the work will be substantively (consistently) accurate in developing a response to the requirements of the assessment task(s).

Distinction
Upon meeting the learning outcomes of a unit in order to confirm eligibility for the award of credit, the student, student's work or performance is judged to be **excellent** and **consistently** meets the requirements of the components and selected sub-components for a Grading Standard

Excellent
Assessors will use their professional judgement to identify and feed back on work that is considered to be excellent and is likely to have few, if any, areas for further development in response to the elements being assessed.

For more information, you may wish to view the Converting Assignment Briefs to Meet the Requirements of the Revised Grading Scheme of the Access to HE Grading Scheme Toolkit.

Generally
Work will contain some errors in terms of application (of knowledge or skills) and there will be some areas which may need further development. The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria will be met and, on balance, the work will exceed their requirements while being broadly (generally) accurate in developing a response to the requirements of the assessment task(s).

Learning outcomes
Statements of what a student may reasonably be expected to know, understand or do as the result of undertaking a process of learning. Learning outcomes are expressed in a standard linguistic form.

Merit
Upon meeting the learning outcomes of a unit in order to confirm eligibility for the award of credit, the student, student's work or performance is judged to be **very good** and **generally** meets the requirements of the components and selected sub-components for a Grading Standard.

Pass
The student, student's work or performance meets the learning outcomes of the unit and is eligible for the award of credit.

Very good
Assessors will use their professional judgement to identify and feed back on work that is considered to be very good and may include some inconsistencies in response to the elements being assessed.

For more information you may wish to view the [Converting Assignment Briefs to Meet the Requirements of the Revised Grading Scheme](#) of the Access to HE Grading Toolkit.

Terms that apply to specific Grading Standards

Terms applying to Grading Standard 1 only

This Standard provides the opportunity for assessors to judge the extent to which a student has acquired and applied the subject-specific and subject-related knowledge relevant to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for a given unit

Terms applying specifically to Grading Standard 2

Intellectual skill
Discipline-specific intellectual skills include critical thinking, use of information, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, reasoning, argumentation and problem-solving, in line with the requirements of the assessment criteria command verbs.

An example of an intellectual skill in history could be analysing causation and consequences of a conflict. In English literature, an example could be a textual analysis. For an independent project, it could be generating a hypothesis or research question.

Technical skill
Discipline-specific technical skills include resource design, identification, selection and use of specific tools in line with the requirements of the assessment criteria command verbs.

An example of a technical skill in computing could be designing a computer programme. In research, it could be using tools for data analysis (for example, Microsoft Excel). In education/teaching, an example could be designing online learning resources. In accounting, an example could be using accounting software. In art and design, an example could be using different pencils to show line, tone and texture.

Practical skill
Discipline-specific practical skills include experiments and performance - in line with the requirements of the assessment criteria command verbs.

An example of a practical skill in science could be undertaking an experiment.

Terms applying specifically to Grading Standard 3

Autonomy
We recognise that within different subject disciplines, different terms will be used - both autonomy and independence are included ('and/or') to allow for tutors to interpret the requirement broadly and in line with their application in specific subject disciplines.

In considering the application of GS3b for research projects, autonomy could be identified through student selection and direction of a research topic and associated 'higher level' activity for the research question, while independence could be identified through students completing the research question as set, without requiring input from staff other than the normal review points for such a project.

Communication
Communication has different meanings in different subject disciplines and in different types of assignments. Communication in visual arts has a different meaning and manifestation to that in performing arts; communication in a group work task is different to the communication of experimental results.

Tutors will be experienced in explaining to their students the context for their discipline through assignment briefs.

Independence
We recognise that within different subject disciplines, different terms will be used - both independence and autonomy are included ('and/or') to allow for tutors to interpret the requirement broadly and in line with their application in specific subject disciplines.

In considering the application of GS3b for research projects, independence could be identified through students completing the research question as set, without requiring input from staff other than the normal review points for such a project, while autonomy could be identified through student selection and direction of a research topic and associated 'higher level' activity for the research question.

Paralanguage
Paralanguage refers to verbal and non-verbal communication.

Presentation
Presentation has different meanings in different subject disciplines and in different types of assignments. Presentation of a set of accounts may follow a particular format but would not necessarily require an oral presentation. Inclusion of the term 'presentation skills' within GS3a covers a range of presentation types and is not limited to an oral presentation.

Tutors will be experienced in explaining to their students the context for their discipline through assignment briefs.