

Marking Criteria

Contents

Undergraduate Assessment Criteria	3
Core Criteria	3
Additional Criteria	3
Undergraduate Coursework and Independent Study Projects (ISPs)	4
Undergraduate Written Examinations	5
Postgraduate Assessment Criteria	7
Core Criteria	7
Additional Criteria	7
Postgraduate Coursework and Dissertations	8
Postgraduate Written Examinations	9
Language Acquisition Assessment Criteria	11

Undergraduate Assessment Criteria

Core Criteria

The marking criteria (competence standards) for all SOAS undergraduate programmes draw upon the following **minimum core criteria**, which are applicable to the assessment of most or all assignments:

- understanding of the subject
- utilisation of proper academic [or other] style (e.g. citation of references, or use of proper legal style for court reports, etc.)
- relevance of material selected and of the arguments proposed
- planning and organisation
- logical coherence
- critical evaluation
- comprehensiveness of research
- evidence of synthesis
- innovation / creativity / originality

The language used must be of a sufficient standard to permit assessment of the above criteria.

These minimum core criteria form a part of the School's core academic standards, applied to all coursework and as such they would not usually be subject to any modification, even as a reasonable adjustment for students with disabilities.

Additional Criteria

The minimum core criteria intentionally do not include standards concerning the presentational aspects of the work, such as spelling and punctuation in written assignments; nor do they include the criteria for certain specialist assignments (e.g. musical performance). Departments select *additional criteria* for certain assignments, as appropriate to the learning outcomes being assessed. Such additional criteria are not standard to all modules, but they are part of the competence standards for specific modules and assignments.

The *additional criteria* could include:

- appropriate spelling / grammar / punctuation
- other skills as appropriate to the form of assessment (e.g. quality of accent, pronunciation, diction and other vocal qualities for an assessment involving speech)
- The demonstration of specific knowledge or abilities relevant to the assignment / examination (e.g. practical skills in archaeology or playing a musical instrument)

The department will provide students with information about any additional criteria which may be used to mark a particular assignment.

Undergraduate Coursework and Independent Study Projects (ISPs)

The guidelines below reflect the standards of work expected at undergraduate level and apply to coursework and Independent Study Projects.

80+ (First Class)

A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows clear evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- shows a rigorous use and a confident understanding of relevant source materials
- achieves an appropriate balance between factual detail and key theoretical issues
- provides evidence of original thinking

70-79 (First Class)

A mark in the range 70-79 will fulfil the following criteria:

- engages closely with the question
- shows some evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- shows some sophistication of argument
- shows an intelligent use and a good understanding of relevant source materials

60-69 (Upper Second Class)

A mark in the range 60-69 will fulfil the following criteria:

- offers critical insights and shows evidence of critical thinking
- shows a good understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues, and addresses the relevant literature on the topic
- develops a focused and clear argument and articulates a sustained train of logical thought
- gives a clear exposition of models/diagrams, with derivation, where appropriate
- shows clear evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer and includes a judicious choice of sources and methodology

50-59 (Lower Second Class)

A mark in the range 50-59 will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows some understanding of relevant major theoretical and/or factual issues
- shows evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer, makes selective use of appropriate sources, and demonstrates some knowledge of the literature
- shows, at various points if not throughout the entire text, examples of a clear train of thought or argument
- presents basic models / diagrams, where appropriate
- provides an appropriate conclusion to the textual argument(s)

40-49 (Third Class)

A mark in the range 40-49 will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows some awareness and understanding of the factual and/or theoretical issues, but demonstrates limited ability to develop these
- provides clear evidence of misunderstandings
- shows some, albeit limited, evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer, but also includes material or arguments which are irrelevant or unrelated to the question
- fails to develop a clear or coherent response to the question, but shows occasional knowledge or insight

20-39 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- fail to answer the question or develop an argument
- fail to demonstrate knowledge of the key issues or arguments
- contain clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings
- are poorly organised and/or poorly written

0-19 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- fail to answer the question even in part
- show no knowledge of the question or topic
- contain blatant conceptual or factual errors
- are very poorly organised and/or very poorly written

Undergraduate Written Examinations

80+ (First Class)

A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows clear evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- shows a rigorous use and a confident understanding of relevant source materials
- achieves an appropriate balance between factual detail and key theoretical issues
- provides evidence of original thinking
- shows outstanding ability of synthesis under exam pressure

70-79 (First Class)

A mark in the range 70-79 will fulfil the following criteria:

- engages closely with the question and its conceptual issues
- shows some evidence of independent reading
- shows some sophistication of argument
- shows an intelligent use and a good understanding of relevant source materials
- shows significant ability of synthesis under exam pressure

60-69 (Upper Second Class)

A mark in the range 60-69 will fulfil the following criteria:

- offers critical insights and shows evidence of critical thinking
- shows a good understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues relating to the question
- cites some relevant literature on the topic
- develops a focused and clear argument and articulates a sustained train of logical thought
- gives a clear exposition of models/diagrams, with derivation, where appropriate
- shows clear evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer under exam pressure

50-59 (Lower Second Class)

A mark in the range 50-59 will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows some understanding of relevant major theoretical and/or factual issues
- shows evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer,

- makes selective use of appropriate sources, and demonstrates some knowledge of the literature
- shows, at various points if not throughout the entire text, examples of a clear train of thought or argument
- presents basic models / diagrams, where appropriate
- provides an appropriate conclusion to the textual argument(s)

40-49 (Third Class)

A mark in the range 40-49 will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows some awareness and understanding of the factual and/or theoretical issues, but demonstrates limited ability to develop these
- provides clear evidence of misunderstandings
- shows some, albeit limited, evidence of planning in the formulation of the written answer, but also includes material or arguments which are irrelevant or unrelated to the question
- fails to develop a clear or coherent response to the question, but shows occasional knowledge or insight
- produces an incomplete answer

20-39 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- fail to answer the question or develop an argument
- fail to demonstrate knowledge of the key issues or arguments
- contain clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings
- are poorly organised and/or poorly written

0-19 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- fail to answer the question even in part
- show no knowledge of the question or topic
- contain blatant conceptual or factual errors
- are very poorly organised and/or very poorly written

Postgraduate Assessment Criteria

Core Criteria

The marking criteria (competence standards) for all SOAS postgraduate programmes draw upon the following **minimum core criteria**, which are applicable to the assessment of most or all assignments:

- understanding of the subject
- utilisation of proper academic [or other] style (e.g. citation of references, or use of proper legal style for court reports, etc.)
- relevance of material selected and of the arguments proposed
- planning and organisation
- logical coherence
- critical evaluation
- comprehensiveness of research
- evidence of synthesis
- innovation / creativity / originality

The language used must be of a sufficient standard to permit assessment of the above criteria.

These minimum core criteria form a part of the School's core academic standards, applied to all coursework and as such they would not usually be subject to any modification, even as a reasonable adjustment for students with disabilities.

Additional Criteria

The minimum core criteria intentionally do not include standards concerning the presentational aspects of the work, such as spelling and punctuation in written assignments; nor do they include the criteria for certain specialist assignments (e.g. musical performance). Departments select *additional criteria* for certain assignments, as appropriate to the learning outcomes being assessed on that occasion. Such additional criteria are not standard to all modules, but they are part of the competence standards for the specific module and assignments.

The *additional criteria* could include:

- appropriate spelling / grammar / punctuation
- other skills as appropriate to the form of assessment (e.g. quality of accent, pronunciation, diction and other vocal qualities for an assessment involving speech)
- The demonstration of specific knowledge or abilities relevant to the assignment / examination (e.g. practical skills in archaeology or playing a musical instrument)

The department will provide students with information about any additional criteria which may be used to mark a particular assignment.

Postgraduate Coursework and Dissertations

The guidelines below reflect the standards of work expected at postgraduate level and apply to coursework and dissertations.

80+ (Distinction)

A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:

- very significant ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research project or coursework assignment
- very significant ability to evaluate literature and theory critically and make informed judgements
- very high levels of creativity, originality and independence of thought
- very significant ability to evaluate critically existing methodologies and suggest new approaches to current research or professional practice
- very significant ability to analyse data critically
- outstanding levels of accuracy, technical competence, organisation, expression

70-79 (Distinction)

A mark in the range 70-79 will fulfil the following criteria:

- significant ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research project or coursework assignment
- clear evidence of wide and relevant reading, referencing and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- capacity to develop a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- rigorous use and a sophisticated understanding of relevant source materials, balancing appropriately between factual detail and key theoretical issues. Materials are evaluated directly and their assumptions and arguments challenged and/or appraised
- correct referencing
- significant ability to analyse data critically
- original thinking and a willingness to take risks

60-69 (Merit)

A mark in the 60-69 range will fulfil the following criteria:

- ability to plan, organise and execute independently a research project or coursework assignment
- strong evidence of critical insight and thinking
- a detailed understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues and directly engages with the relevant literature on the topic
- clear evidence of planning and appropriate choice of sources and methodology with correct referencing
- ability to analyse data critically
- capacity to develop a focussed and clear argument and articulate clearly and convincingly a sustained train of logical thought

50-59 (Pass)

A mark in the range 50-59 will fulfil the following criteria:

- Ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment
- a reasonable understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues involved
- evidence of some knowledge of the literature with correct referencing
- ability to analyse data
- shows examples of a clear train of thought or argument
- the text is introduced and concludes appropriately

40-49 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases in which there is:

- limited ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment
- some awareness and understanding of the literature and of factual or theoretical issues, but with little development
- limited ability to analyse data
- incomplete referencing
- limited ability to present a clear and coherent argument

20-39 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases in which there is:

- very limited ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment
- fails to develop a coherent argument that relates to the research project or assignment
- does not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues
- incomplete referencing
- contains clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings
- only fragmentary evidence of critical thought or data analysis

0-19 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- no demonstrable ability to plan, organise and execute a research project or coursework assignment
- little or no knowledge or understanding related to the research project or assignment;
- little or no knowledge of the relevant literature
- major errors in referencing
- no evidence of critical thought or data analysis
- incoherent argument
- Unseen written examinations

Postgraduate Written Examinations**80+ (Distinction)**

A mark of 80+ will fulfil the following criteria:

- very significant ability to evaluate literature and theory critically and make informed judgements
- very high levels of creativity, originality and independence of thought
- outstanding levels of accuracy, technical competence, organisation, expression
- shows outstanding ability of synthesis under exam pressure

70-79 (Distinction)

A mark in the 70-79 range will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows clear evidence of wide and relevant reading and an engagement with the conceptual issues
- develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument
- shows a rigorous use and a sophisticated understanding of relevant source materials, balancing appropriately between factual detail and key theoretical issues
- Materials are evaluated directly and their assumptions and arguments challenged and/or appraised
- shows original thinking and a willingness to take risks

- shows significant ability of synthesis under exam pressure

60-69 (Merit)

A mark in the 60-69 range will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows strong evidence of critical insight and critical thinking
- shows a detailed understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues and directly engages with the relevant literature on the topic
- develops a focussed and clear argument and articulates clearly and convincingly a sustained train of logical thought
- shows clear evidence of planning and appropriate choice of sources and methodology, and ability of synthesis under exam pressure

50-59 (Pass)

A mark in the 50-59 range will fulfil the following criteria:

- shows a reasonable understanding of the major factual and/or theoretical issues involved
- shows evidence of planning and selection from appropriate sources
- demonstrates some knowledge of the literature
- the text shows, in places, examples of a clear train of thought or argument
- the text is introduced and concludes appropriately

40-49 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases in which:

- there is some awareness and understanding of the factual or theoretical issues, but with little development
- misunderstandings are evident
- there is some evidence of planning, although irrelevant/unrelated material or arguments are included

20-39 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- fail to answer the question or to develop an argument that relates to the question set
- do not engage with the relevant literature or demonstrate a knowledge of the key issues
- contain clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings

0-19 (Fail)

A Fail will be awarded in cases which:

- show no knowledge or understanding related to the question set
- show no evidence of critical thought or analysis
- contain short answers and incoherent argument

Language Acquisition Assessment Criteria

In addition to the general marking guidelines for undergraduate and postgraduate taught modules, the following guidelines relate specifically to Language Acquisition modules.

Students will normally demonstrate their achievements in four aspects of language learning (oral comprehension, oral expression, reading, and writing), as well as in metalinguistic knowledge.

Each language module separately defines its goals and expected outcomes (these are detailed in the learning outcomes for the module), and different aspects of achievements are relevant for different modules.

However, all assessment of language acquisition modules makes reference to the following Generic Marking Guidelines (although different modules may assign different weightings to the criteria).

In addition to the Generic Marking Guidelines, modules may make reference to additional Module Specific Marking Guidelines. These may make reference to specific aspects and learning outcomes of the module and how achievement in these aspects is demonstrated.

80+ (First Class)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand with ease the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, without any difficulties
- Oral Expression: Can express with ease a very wide variety of concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, without any difficulties; advanced level language modules: can communicate idiomatically at near-native level
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a very wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, without any difficulties
- Writing skills: Can produce clear text on a very wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, using the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, without any difficulties; advanced language modules: compositions will show elegance of style and give the impression of being conceived in the target language
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have a confident understanding of the full variety of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date and good awareness of the appropriateness of the full range of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

70-79 (First Class)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module
- Oral Expression: Can express a very wide variety of concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a very wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date
- Writing skills: Can produce clear text on a very wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, using the full range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date

- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have a good understanding of the full variety of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date and good awareness of the appropriateness of the full range of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

60-69 (Upper Second Class)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand with ease a wide range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, but some with some difficulty
- Oral Expression: Can express a wide variety of concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using a wide range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but some with some difficulty
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing a wide range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but some with some difficulty
- Writing skills: Can produce text on a wide variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, using a wide range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but some with some difficulty
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have a good understanding of a wide variety of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date and awareness of the appropriateness of a wide range of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

50-59 (Lower Second Class)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand a good range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, but sometimes only with difficulty
- Oral Expression: Can express a good variety of concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using an appropriate range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but sometimes only with difficulty
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a good variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing an appropriate range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but sometimes only with difficulty
- Writing skills: Can produce text on a good variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, using an appropriate range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, but sometimes only with difficulty
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have an appropriate understanding of a good variety of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date and awareness of the appropriateness of an appropriate range of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

40-49 (UG students: Third Class; PG students: Fail)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand a limited range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, and often only with difficulty
- Oral Expression: Can express a limited variety of concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using a limited range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and often only with difficulty
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a limited variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing a limited range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and often only with difficulty

- Writing skills: Can produce text on a limited variety of topics appropriate for the level of the module, using a limited range of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and often only with difficulty
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have some understanding of a limited variety of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date and awareness of the appropriateness of a limited range of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

20-39 (Fail)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand only a small subset of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, and only with difficulty
- Oral Expression: Can express only a few concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using only a small subset of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with difficulty
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on a few of the topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing only a small subset of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with difficulty
- Writing skills: Can produce text on a few of the topics appropriate for the level of the module, using only a small subset of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with difficulty
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have very little understanding of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date, and awareness of the appropriateness of only a small subset of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context

0-19 (Fail)

- Oral Comprehension: Can understand very little or none of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date in spoken discourse, up to the level appropriate for the module, and only with considerable difficulty
- Oral Expression: Can express very few or no concepts and ideas appropriate for the level of the module, using only very little or none of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with considerable difficulty
- Reading skills: Can understand written text on very few or none of the topics appropriate for the level of the module, containing very little or none of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with considerable difficulty
- Writing skills: Can produce text on very few or none of the topics appropriate for the level of the module, using very little or none of the vocabulary, structures and expressions studied to date, and only with considerable difficulty
- Metalinguistic knowledge: Have no understanding or awareness of the underlying structural relations of the language studied to date, and of the appropriateness of the structures and forms of the language studied to date in a given context