



The University of Manchester
Alliance Manchester Business School

**Faculty of Humanities
Alliance Manchester Business School
Reduced Scale Step Marking
FAQs for Undergraduate Students**

In line with The University of Manchester, Alliance MBS has introduced something called 'Reduced scale step marking' across all AMBS taught programmes from the start of the 2017/18 academic year.

You will need to refer to the grade descriptors to understand which marks can be awarded and what that mark means.

1. What is reduced scale stepped marking?

Marking that uses a restricted number of marks with the 0-100% range.

2. Why has reduced scale stepped marking been introduced?

Feedback from students suggests that they are not always sure about the difference between different percentage marks (e.g. what the difference is between a piece of work that is graded at 66% and one that is graded at 68%).

Reduced scale stepped marking will provide you with greater clarity about the quality of your work. It will allow clearer comparisons between marks attained in one course unit and another.

Reduced scale stepped marking is also intended to allow excellence to be appropriately rewarded. Markers are encouraged to reward the best quality work with the highest marks, using the full mark range, but this doesn't always happen. We hope that the introduction of reduced scale stepped marking will help markers to make greater use of the full range of marks at the upper and lower ends of the scale, thus ensuring that marks reflect the quality of the work presented.

3. Will I be advantaged or disadvantaged by the introduction of reduced scale stepped marking?

No. All assessments are moderated which means that the marking is reviewed. External Examiners also review marking. This ensures that you can be confident that the mark you receive reflects the quality of the work you have submitted.

The introduction of this marking scheme is intended to help you get greater clarity about the quality of your work and, in turn, this will improve the feedback you get on your work and provide you with guidance and advice on how to improve your work.

4. How does it work?

Up to now, summative assessments on undergraduate course units have been marked using a scale that ranged from 0 to 100%, with marked work falling into different classes of performance, as follows:

%	Class
70-100	First class
60-69	Upper Second class (or 2.1)
50-59	Lower second class (or 2.2)
40-49	Third class
0-39	Fail

On the reduced scale stepped marking scale, a restricted number of marks or fixed percentages, which represent the lower, middle and upper ranges of the standard classification bands (First, 2:1, 2:2, etc.), is used. For each of the above classification bands, work is deemed to meet the criteria minimally (lower range), well (mid-range) or very well (upper range).

To facilitate the best spread of marks along this spectrum, the reduced scale uses percentage figures ending in 2, 5 and 8 in each band (with the exception of the very lowest band in the Fail class). So, for example, work that is considered to meet the criteria for a mid-range First will be awarded either 82%, 85% or 88%. The same applies to work that meets the criteria for the other classification bands.

Here is the full range of available marks or fixed percentages on the reduced scale:

Range	Reduced scale stepped marking (fixed %)
Upper-range First	100
Upper-range First	95
Upper-range First	92
Mid-range First	88
Mid-range First	85
Mid-range First	82
Lower-range First	78
Lower-range First	75
Lower-range First	72
Upper-range 2.1	68
Mid-range 2.1	65
Lower-range 2.1	62
Upper-range 2.2	58
Mid-range 2.2	55
Lower-range 2.2	52
Upper-range Third	48
Mid-range Third	45
Lower-range Third	42
Compensatory Fail	38
Compensatory Fail	35
Compensatory Fail	32
Fail	28

Fail	25
Fail	22
Fail	15
Fail	5
Fail	0

As you can see, in the First class and Fail zones, where the range of marks available is significantly greater, a range of fixed percentage marks is used.

Assessed work which is quantitative (e.g. numerical or multiple-choice tests) or where there are 'right or wrong' answers will still be marked using the 0-100% scale, since the full range of marks (including 100%) is demonstrably available and the highest marks are achievable by the best students. Other exceptions where reduced scale stepped marking is not appropriate include language tests and exam papers with small numbers of marks for each question. If in doubt, consult your tutor or course unit director.

5. How is the final mark for my course unit calculated?

There will be no change in the way that final marks for course units are calculated.

If your course unit is assessed by one component of assessment only (e.g. an essay or dissertation) the fixed percentage point becomes the course unit mark.

If your course unit is assessed by more than one component of assessment, the fixed percentage points for each component of assessment will be averaged (with appropriate weighting) to produce the overall course unit mark. As the overall course unit mark is calculated by averaging the fixed percentage points, the final result for the course unit does not need to be one of the fixed percentage points on the scale.

For example, a course unit is assessed by a single exam with the paper made up of three questions (equally weighted). The questions have been awarded two mid-range First class and one upper-range First class marks with the following fixed percentage points: 82, 85 and 92. The average of 82, 85 and 92 is 86; 86% is therefore the overall course unit mark.

If a course unit is assessed partly by exam and partly by essay, the overall course unit mark is calculated by averaging (with appropriate weighting) the fixed percentage points for each question to produce the mark for the exam paper, and then averaging (again with appropriate weighting) the mark for the paper and the fixed percentage point for the essay. The overall course unit result will be the mathematical average and does not need to be one of the fixed percentage points on the scale.

6. Can I challenge a mark?

Should you wish to challenge a mark, academic decision (e.g. approval to progress) or classification result, you may only do so on one of the following four grounds:

- circumstances affecting your performance of which, for a credible and compelling reason, the Examination Board or equivalent body may not have been made aware when the decision was taken and which might have had a material effect on the decision (if you wish to appeal on such

grounds, you must give credible and compelling reasons with supporting documentation explaining why this information was not made available prior to the decision being made);

- procedural irregularity;
- evidence of prejudice or bias or lack of proper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners;
- that the supervision or training in respect of research for your dissertation or thesis or equivalent work was unsatisfactory to the point that your performance was seriously affected.

Appeals relating to matters of academic judgement are not permitted.

Appendix 1: Alliance MBS Undergraduate reduced scale stepped marking points

Class	Descriptor (which reflects the highest possible mark attainable)	Possible Mark
Upper-range first	Your work is exceptional and of sufficient quality to be awarded an upper-range first class mark. Your work is authoritative and amply demonstrates very advanced knowledge and a very advanced ability to integrate the full range of principles, theories, evidence and techniques. The clarity and originality of thought and the way that it is expressed is very impressive for this level of work.	100
Upper-range first		95
Upper-range first		92
Mid-range first	Your work is outstanding and of sufficient quality to be awarded a mid-range first class mark. Your response to the question is insightful. You demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of this topic. To improve future marks you should attempt to refine your analysis and arguments even further.	88
Mid-range first		85
Mid-range first		82
Lower-range first	Your work is excellent and of sufficient quality to be awarded a lower-range first class mark. You demonstrate a detailed level of understanding of this topic. To improve future marks you should attempt to identify any weaker parts of your argument and/or its presentation, ensure you have addressed opposing viewpoints or evidence decisively, and consider extending the range and use of supporting resources even further.	78
Lower-range first		75
Lower-range first		72
2.1	Your work is very good and of sufficient quality to be awarded a merit mark. Your work is sound and well-considered. To improve future marks you could integrate a wider range of sources and/or deepen your analysis. You may also need to develop weaker parts of your argument and/or its presentation, ensuring that you have identified and addressed key opposing viewpoints or evidence.	68
2.1		65
2.1		62
2.2	Your work is good and of sufficient quality to be awarded a pass mark. Your work is competent and coherent. To improve future marks you could integrate a wider range of sources and should increase your level of critical appraisal and seek to demonstrate a more integrated understanding of the subject and possible opposing viewpoints in your analysis. You could also improve the presentation and structure of your work.	58
2.2		55
2.2		52
3	Your work has sufficient knowledge, use of appropriate resources and quality of presentation to warrant a pass. You demonstrate an adequate understanding of the topic. To achieve a higher mark you need to make sure that all your points are fully supported with data or evidence from the literature. You also need to achieve greater analytical depth and take fuller account of opposing viewpoints or evidence in order to provide more substantial, comprehensive and nuanced	48
3		45
3		42

	support for your argument.	
F	Your work demonstrates insufficient knowledge and skills in the specific topic area and does not merit a pass mark. Your work demonstrates some awareness of the topic, although it is a frequently incoherent, or partial, response. To improve future marks you should improve your awareness of the appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques and engage more critically with them. You should present and structure your arguments better and make sure that they are substantiated. You should seek to undertake, or demonstrate that you have undertaken, independent work.	38
F		35
F		32
F	Your work is inadequate and does not merit a pass mark. It demonstrates a confused or deficient awareness of the subject matter. To improve future marks you should improve your awareness of the appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques and engage critically with them. You should present and structure your arguments and make sure that they are substantiated. You should seek to undertake, or demonstrate that you have undertaken, independent work.	28
F		25
		22
F	Your work is severely inadequate and does not merit a pass mark. You demonstrate a very deficient understanding of the topic. To improve future marks you should improve your awareness of the appropriate principles, theories, evidence and techniques and engage critically with them. You should present and structure your arguments and make sure that they are substantiated. You should seek to undertake, or demonstrate that you have undertaken, independent work.	15
F	Your work is profoundly inadequate and does not merit a pass mark. Your representation or understanding of thinking in the discipline is highly deficient. To improve future marks you should seek to understand thinking in the discipline and engage critically with it. You should present and structure your arguments and make sure that they are substantiated. You should seek to undertake, or demonstrate that you have undertaken, independent work.	5
F		0