

Making Sense of Masters 1

Analysing assessment and results

You can see from the date below that what follows was written some time ago. I must, therefore, justify its inclusion.

In my view the paper still says something useful. I think it is fair to say that it comes from a time when some people in older universities were unwillingly learning to use assessment criteria, performance descriptors and intended learning outcomes. My background included experience of public examinations, alternative assessment strategies and National Curriculum assessment and I felt very comfortable working like this; not all of my colleagues did.

I was not the sole author of the instruments of assessment used at M-level in the Education Department but I was the chief designer and propagator. If that entitles me to claim credit then it also condemns me to accept any blame for their shortcomings. However, no matter if the words of the assessment criteria and their accompanying written guidance were mostly my own their meaning developed as they were read and used by others. Before I retired from the University I had been considering modifying the assessment criteria in the light of what I had learned from using them.

The paper that follows was written to make sense of the different ways in which colleagues constructed judgments upon M-level dissertations submitted for examination, specifically by our students in Israel. It then became a basis for explaining to students how we at Liverpool assessed at M-level in education; for the induction and development of new associate tutors; and for further analysis of our provision.

I need to explain that at that time we had, under the orders of the University, introduced a distinction level. The paper helped to grow understanding of what that looked like. Unlike many universities today I designed assessment criteria to function like attainment targets in the National Curriculum; and it is important to realise that, despite publicly adhering to the official religion that all components of a masters degree are at the same level, I built progression into the criteria and, therefore, made reference to three levels. My arguments for this were that as participants went from postgraduate certificate to postgraduate diploma to dissertation they built knowledge and understanding and also that the 20,000 word dissertation was a significantly different mode of assessment for which the earlier levels had been preparation. I ought to have used the word 'stages'.

Kate Johnston was in charge of masters programmes and I was overall director of CPD.

MODULAR ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (MAPS)

**ASSESSMENT AND RESULTS
AT LEVEL THREE (M.ED)**

THE LIVERPOOL EXTENSION IN ISRAEL

1998/99

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into MAPS assessment and results at Level Three (dissertation) and to provide useful recommendations for practice. It is part of our commitment to constant monitoring and self-review and intended primarily to be used within the Department.

2.0 Background

Continuous assessment is the Department's chosen method of examination. There are no examinations under timed, controlled conditions. Progression and differentiation are designed into MAPS programmes; and the process of assessment is criterion based. In other words, participants should obtain the grade which matches their level of performance, judged against each of the assessment criteria. The progressive levels built into MAPS mean that all participants are given the opportunity to work to their optimum. They do not have to attempt all levels at once and they may stop at an intermediate level if it is judged appropriate. Furthermore, in the absence of any predetermined norm, there is no artificial barrier which would prevent any participant from obtaining a distinction. If every participant in a programme obtained a distinction it should be regarded as the product of appropriate effort and ability by both participants and tutors. It should not be taken as a sign of low standards. In the same way there are no predetermined norms ensuring failure for some. We do not seek to establish a spurious sense of high standards by deliberately failing a percentage of students. Details of the structure of MAPS are included at ANNEX ONE; and details of the assessment criteria for Level Three, including the guidance and performance descriptors which accompany them, are included at ANNEX TWO.

3.0 Scope and focus

The focus of this paper is upon assessment of the performance of 111 Israeli MAPS students at Level Three (dissertation). Each of these students had previously been assessed at Levels One and Two but the analysis of the assessment of their performance was not as thorough-going as that intended here. It is expected that there will be lessons learned which can be applied throughout the MAPS levels and which will also be useful to U.K. based work. Nevertheless, the clear focus is upon Israeli Level Three dissertations. Much of the material used has been taken from the comments and judgements of the Liverpool based second assessors. Under the memorandum of agreement between the University

and Kidum Colleges in Israel it is the academic judgement of the Department of Education in Liverpool which takes precedence. While it is acknowledged that there are differences between first and second assessors which are interesting and worth exploring, it is the second stage assessment which is regarded as setting the standard and is, therefore, the subject of this analysis.

Moderation and standardisation are present in MAPS assessment. They are not specifically explored in this paper but it is expected that its findings will be useful in the further improvement of those processes. The paper, which has been written prior to consideration of formal feedback from external examiners, does not seek to examine or justify the basic assumption that MAPS assessment should be continuous and criterion based. It does, however, touch upon these issues.

4.0 Sources and methods

Given the purpose of this paper it is important to ensure that a reasonable amount of reliable evidence is assembled and analysed sufficiently to extract useful lessons. The primary sources of information are the dissertations of 111 Israeli MEd students and the reports upon them by second assessors in the Department of Education in Liverpool. We have studied all of the reports, written some of them, talked to all of the second assessors, particularly about fails, read many of the dissertations and discussed all aspects of Level Three MAPS with Ruth Yakir, the Academic Director of Kidum. We have also discussed a preliminary analysis of failing dissertations with Israeli supervisors and have talked to students about their failing dissertations.

In its present form this paper carries no references to relevant academic literature. There is, however, a theoretical theme. It is the use of criteria to maintain coherence across, and make sense of, disparate sets of learning experiences.

We have resisted the temptation to count everything. For example, we have presented (at 9.0) a paraphrase of the common words and phrases which occur in the comments of second assessors, rather than a calculation of the word/phrase frequency, because we are aiming at conveying a sense of what was written. We have also generated a number of assumptions and questions; but we have tried to control the desire to seek out every begged question. We take the view that in a paper such as this it is worth sacrificing a few begged questions in order to concentrate upon generating some useful recommendations for practice.

5.0 Breakdown and distribution of results by grade

Submissions :	111		
Passes without distinction:	71	=	63.9%
Passes with distinction:	19	=	17.2%
Fails with resubmission:	21	=	18.9%

Two of the passes with distinction failed first time at Level Three. This also happened at Levels One and Two, which had very low failure rates after resubmission. Therefore, although the Level Three failure rate is high at first submission, experience suggests that, after re-submission, we should expect more passes. Some of these may be passes with distinction. There should be very few fails for which further resubmission is not allowed.

Although the number of students who failed completely after re-submission was very small at Levels One and Two, the cost of achieving the same at Level Three is much higher. Instead of making changes to a short essay in order to resubmit, the changes are to a 20,000 word dissertation. Further supervision, first and second marking, the involvement of external examiners, extra administration and the erosion of time allocated for other work mean that it becomes important to reduce the number of students in this category to a small figure. That is apart from our natural desire as teachers to see our efforts lead to success.

The figure of 111 includes some re-submissions from the first batch of dissertations which arrived in 1998. We have felt it right not to include them with the 21 fails to be analysed here because they were very early submissions which would have benefited from more time and could be regarded as part of the bedding in process for the Liverpool Extension in Israel.

6.0 Common themes in the comments made by Liverpool based (second) assessors upon students graded fail with opportunity to resubmit

Analysis of the comments made by second assessors indicates three categories of failure. The first two can be quantified but the third is more difficult to isolate as a specific cause of failure.

The first discernible category was **organisation**. Seven students came into this category. Second assessors applied the category both to the overall structure of dissertations and to how description, evidence and argument were presented to the reader. Failing students were felt not to be in control of their material.

The second category was **methodology**. Thirteen students came into this category. Second assessors considered that failing students did not discuss the various merits of different methods of research. They did not make a choice of method or methods which was shown to relate to the purpose of the dissertation; and they showed no awareness of the limitations imposed by their choice. It was also pointed out by second assessors that failing students did not apply their chosen methods very well. Quantitative methods in particular were often poorly used, either because significance was assumed where none could be justified or because insufficient raw data was provided to help make a judgement upon the information presented. It should be noted, however, that dissertations which failed because of weak methodology were often well thought of in other respects.

The third category was **language**. This cannot easily be quantified. Second assessors noticed an exceptionally large number of proof-reading problems. These were not, in themselves, a direct reason for failure; and, it is worth noting here, many passing dissertations also suffered from poor proof-reading. Nevertheless, the weak dissertations were further weakened if they were not properly proof-read.

Another aspect of language as a category of failure was the even more difficult to quantify feeling that justice had not always been done to students' work by translators.

7.0 Frequency of fails against assessment criteria; derived from Liverpool assessors' scores

terms of what the relevant literature was and not in terms of why it was relevant and appropriate and how it was used. (ANNEX TWO).

Second assessors may also have considered that, although students were capable of constructing a principled basis for enquiry and an appropriate literature base, (criteria one and two) they did not proceed to deal appropriately with the evidence and, therefore, performed badly on criteria four, six and eight.

- b) Another surprise was the comparatively good performance of failing students against criterion nine. The challenge here for students was to arrive at supported conclusions and to make recommendations for policy or practice which are securely grounded. We expected students who had difficulty handling and presenting evidence would be weak when judged against this criterion. Some students produced sets of professionally relevant recommendations which, while well-written and worthy in themselves, had only tenuous links with the main body of the dissertation. Perhaps some second assessors may have treated conclusions and recommendations rather kindly.
- c) The criteria which are most prominent among the fails are four, six and eight. Against four, students are expected to connect ideas and evidence, justify conclusions and claims and explain why and where evidence supports conclusions. Against six, students are expected to make meaning clear, have a good structure for the complete dissertation and produce supported arguments. Against eight, the expectation is that information should be analysed in accordance with the chosen methodology and that the analysis should, for example, examine the nature and strength of evidence. Crucial factors should be identified and theories and ideas tested for coherence.

It is quite clear from the written comments of second assessors that methodology and its application caused considerable problems for failing students. It was expected that there would have been some discussion and justification of the chosen method(s) and an awareness of limitations. Instead, otherwise well-designed and executed dissertations were spoiled by totally unmediated research methods. In particular, when the method was quantitative, it was often not helped by poor mathematics and an unchallenging approach to evidence.

Second assessors were very sensitive to anything which looked like a cavalier approach to evidence, whether the chosen method was quantitative or qualitative.

8.0 Characteristics of a failing dissertation

Having considered carefully what we had learned from the assessment of the 1998/99 dissertations, we assembled the following list of characteristics which, in varying degrees and no particular order, can be found in those that failed.

- a) A literature review which was over descriptive and under analytic: where the writer desisted from critical engagement and subdued their own professional voice.
- b) A methodology which did not connect with the introductory chapter or the literature review or the conclusion: where no explanation of, or reflection upon, method was offered.
- c) Results which did not connect with the rest of the dissertation: unmediated, unreviewed, unexplained.
- d) A conclusion which did not loop back to the earlier parts of the dissertation: no reflection on purpose or method or findings.
- e) Recommendations which stood alone as self-evident good ideas: as if they were not part of the dissertation.
- f) A lack of proof-reading: in terms of spelling, punctuation, presentation and meaning.
- g) Poor referencing: in terms of both accuracy and the introduction of evidence to support arguments and sweeping statements.
- h) A title which became a handicap: either in terms of complexity or length of work needed to do it justice.

9.0 Common themes in the comments by Liverpool based (second) assessors upon students obtaining distinctions.

A number of words and phrases recurred and were used positively in the feedback written by second assessors. They included the following. Please note that they have been paraphrased somewhat. In order to make this exercise more useful we have added short, paraphrased descriptions and interpretations of how they were applied.

Words/phrases

applications

clarity

of purpose, methodology and use of evidence

organisation	in the treatment of evidence and in the dissertation as a whole
focus	distinguishing foreground from background
links	between theory and practice, between arguments and evidence, between different sections of a dissertation
context	as `focus' but also bringing out the professional purpose and usefulness of the dissertation
connecting	as `links' plus professional purpose
professional purpose	often used in respect of criterion one and nine
justification	of method, personal professional opinion and of findings based upon evidence
structure	as `organisation' and often seen as a logical and developmental narrative, leading to a conclusion
discussion of methods	in terms of discussing and justifying the chosen method(s) and an awareness of limitations
critically reflective	upon professional experience, literature and method
systematic	as `organization', `links', `structure', `connecting' and `professional purpose'
coherent	as `systematic' but also in terms of clarity and overall balance
grounded conclusions and recommendations	as `coherent' and `structure', particularly in respect of the collection of appropriate evidence and its proper treatment
considered use of literature	in terms of its interrogation rather than simple description

professional voice	this particularly relates to criterion seven
sense-making	often seen as one professional explaining things for the benefit of others
digestion of data	in terms of proper processing of evidence and its presentation to the reader
professional impact	relating, in particular, to criterion nine
significance	in terms of understanding what is important about findings
challenging	as in a refusal to take theories, the views of others and personal opinions at face value

10 Frequency of distinctions against assessment criteria; derived from Liverpool assessors' scores

against criteria, does not mean that there were a large number of students who gained distinctions while a small number failed. The difference in the overall number of ticks is a function of the rules applying to distinctions and fails. In order to achieve an overall distinction at Level Three a student must amass a minimum of seven out of nine distinctions against criteria, with no fails. In order to be awarded an overall fail a student needs to acquire only one fail against a criterion. This explains the greater number of ticks in the distinction table compared with the fail table.

On the basis of the information in the distinction table three assumptions should be tested.

- a) If students are good enough to obtain a distinction for one or two criteria they are likely to be good enough to obtain a distinction for several. If this is a sound assumption it begs the questions : `If one or two criteria tell us all we need to know about a student why do we need nine and should we think about weighting them?'
- b) The criteria are interlocking and provide a frame upon which to build a good dissertation : they constitute a set of categories for the definition of a good dissertation. If this is a sound assumption then perhaps they should be presented in a different sequence in order to reflect the planning and construction of a dissertation and the test for inclusion of a criterion should be how well it works to achieve that object.
- c) Assessors may award a distinction for one criterion and `grow' the others from it. In other words, a halo effect is operating. We can find no evidence of this. Nevertheless, assessors need to beware the danger of being influenced by their first impression. If this does happen then the system of second and sometimes third assessments should work against it, as should external examination.

The differences in the frequency scores are not as wide for the distinctions as for the fails (smallest score 64% of largest c.f. 20%). Nevertheless, it is possible to single out one criterion for examination. Criterion seven (independent enquiry and thought) has the highest score. From Level One much attention was given to writing in the first person, making full use of personal professional experience and expertise, taking responsibility for personal views and establishing a clear and authoritative professional voice. Given the cultural expectations Israeli students had about academic examinations at the beginning of the programmes, the frequency score for this criterion indicates that the attention given to this area of activity early on, in terms both of teaching and the provision of feedback, has been outstandingly successful. Comments from students about the professionally transforming nature of the programme appear to be borne out.

11.0 Characteristics of a dissertation graded distinction

- a) A well-chosen title which gives a clear idea of the subject under study and an indication of how it has been approached.
- b) An early clarification of professional purpose and context.
- c) An integrated, developmental structure, leading to conclusions and recommendations.
- d) A confident and critical approach to literature.
- e) A chosen method of research which can be justified by reference to the professional purpose and the literature.
- f) Thorough presentation, review and analysis of evidence; a confident approach to unexpected evidence; and reference back to personal, professional experience and to the literature.
- g) Critical consideration of the weight to be given to all claims made about the significance of evidence.
- h) Conclusions and recommendations which are secure and make clear the professional impact of what has been learned.

12.0 Discussion

There were very few examples of students being awarded fails against all criteria. In most cases failing students obtained passes for most of the criteria and, in some cases, distinctions. This seems to indicate a lack of coherence in the work of students who fail. Some aspects of their work are likely to be worthy of a pass or even a distinction but, if they have not used the guidance on the criteria at the planning stage of their work or as a checklist for self-assessment prior to submission, as advised, they risk picking up a fail. It is, however, possible that some of the apparent inconsistencies of failing students are due to inconsistencies in the application of criteria by second assessors. As the analysis of fails shows, poor use of evidence was the major factor; and it did surprise us that students judged to be weak on evidence were able to achieve passes on related criteria.

On the other hand, there were very few students who obtained distinctions for just one or two criteria. The indication is that if a student can get distinctions they will go on to get enough to achieve an overall distinction. The criteria seem, therefore, to work for those who use them and against those who ignore them. This is not surprising. It would be true of the rules of any game.

However, questions' immediately come to mind. Do the criteria (together with the performance descriptors) help us to differentiate between students? In other words, do they help us create the conditions in which students can demonstrate what they should know, understand and do? And, if they do work positively in this sense, is there anything in our scheme of assessment which blocks accessibility? Could it be, for example, that a badly chosen title is always going to work against a student no matter how closely they attend to the criteria and all the guidance that has been provided to help them perform well?

Assessing by means of criteria which are mediated through written guidance, discussion and comprehensive feedback makes learning more accessible than, for example, assessing by means of multiple choice questions, the responses to which can be scanned by an optical mark reader as in the supermarket. We would also argue that timed examinations under controlled conditions militate against fruitful interaction between student and tutor (and assessors providing feedback) particularly if the assessment language facilitates the interaction. It is unwise, however, to be snobbish about other forms of assessment. They all have a purpose and try to be fit for it. If we wish to be fit for our purpose there are a number of further questions we should proceed to ask ourselves.

The assessment criteria can be used by students and supervisors to construct a good Liverpool dissertation but who says that a good Liverpool dissertation is a good dissertation outside Liverpool? We claim that the criteria represent a language in which supervisors and students can construct an understanding of what constitutes a good dissertation: that the criteria are fit for the purpose of enabling those working in educational fields to make sense of their professional lives. But if we are to legitimate our work it is unlikely that we can do this by finding a national or international norm in order to compare it with our results. There are many assumptions about what constitutes a good performance at masters level but there is no common language in which to establish either benchmarks or norms. Nevertheless, working with colleagues in Israel, with external examiners from other U.K. institutions and with our students, we can use, review and revise our language of assessment to see if it does the job we ask of it.

For this reason we believe that we should not reduce the criteria to one or two major indicators of performance. In short written examinations, where candidates and examiners are both working very quickly, we believe that assessment criteria naturally fall into two broad categories: 'the acquisition of information' and 'the use of information'. There is literally very little time or space in a written examination for making the assessment process much more sophisticated than this. To reduce our assessment criteria to two such broad domains would, if we are to continue to apply them to relatively long and complicated pieces of work, produce a demand by students and tutors for expanded guidance material and exemplification. This would effectively return us to where we are now.

At present the assessment criteria have a dual purpose. They provide guidance on the construction of a dissertation and an understandable language for feedback and examination. Diminishing the vocabulary of the language would reduce accessibility. Continuing to develop our understanding of the language will lead to improved performance.

13.0 Conclusions and recommendations

- a) Criterion one (principled basis for enquiry) is sometimes looked at by second assessors only in terms of the purpose of a dissertation. It should also be used in terms of methodology.
- b) Criterion two (literature base) is sometimes looked at by second assessors only in terms of the completeness of relevant literature. It should also be looked at in terms of the justification of literature and the links to methodology, where appropriate.
- c) Criterion nine (conclusions and recommendations) is sometimes allowed to stand alone. It should be used to examine links and connections to earlier parts of the dissertation.
- d) Students sometimes embark upon unmediated, unexplained research and present evidence in the same way. This should be given careful attention during supervision meetings and in dissertation workshops.
- e) The assessment criteria, together with the guidance provided for each of them, constitute a framework for the construction of a coherent, reliable and useful professional dissertation and a language for examination purposes. We should consider if reordering the criteria might help students and tutors to use them in this way. If this is done we should test each criterion and all guidance for their usefulness as part of such a framework.
- f) Analysis of results and assessment is one way in which we deliver our commitment to constant monitoring and self-review. It should be expanded to include all levels and the analysis should also include discussion of subject content. This would provide us with improved knowledge of both professional needs and the impact of our programmes.
- g) It is significant that the financial cost of failure and our management and quality assurance systems are driving us in the same direction. Successful maintenance of standards is in our interest. It should be achieved by further improvement rather than by expecting and writing off failure.
- h) The research potential of our work should not be ignored.

ANNEX ONE
(Extract from 1998/99 MAPS Handbook)

Three Steps to a Master' Degree
The Structure of the Master's, Diploma and Certificate Programmes

Modular Advanced Professional Studies (MAPS)

MAPS consists of three levels of post-graduate programmes, each leading to an award. Each level is broadly equal in terms of workload, but progressive in terms of intellectual demand and complexity. If it is your intention to complete all three levels and obtain an MEd it will be helpful to think of each level as a step in a pathway.

Each level requires the completion of a programme equivalent to four post-graduate modules of study, each of which is worth fifteen credit points.

Level One Programmes

The Level One programme leads to the award of Post-graduate Certificate in the Advanced Study of Education.

Level Two Programmes

Students who have successfully completed Level One (or who have demonstrated that they can meet the entrance criteria through the Department's procedures for Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience: APEL) may undertake a programme leading to the award of a Post-graduate Diploma.

Level Three Programmes

At Level Three, students who have successfully completed Level Two may begin a programme leading to the submission of a dissertation and the award of Master of Education.

In summary

- MAPS is a three-level set of programmes
- Each level is equivalent to four postgraduate modules of study
- One module is worth fifteen credit points
- Credit is accumulated as follows :

Post-graduate Certificate (four modules)	60 credits
Post-graduate Diploma (four further modules)	120 credits
Med (four further modules)	180 credits

ANNEX TWO

Assessment Criteria

All written work is assessed using general Assessment Criteria and Performance Descriptors. In addition assignments for professionally based programmes for school teachers are clearly related to the intended learning outcomes for each module.

On the following pages you will find Guidance notes on the Assessment Criteria: Level One (pages 8-9) Level Two (pages 10-11) Level Three (page 12), What follows is for your general guidance only.

- Your tutors may provide specific guidance for individual assignments.
- You should not regard the examples which are given as compulsory. They indicate types of appropriate response.
- Your examiners will be looking for insufficient engagement with each criterion.
- Treat the following as a checklist when preparing or reviewing your own work.
- If you are looking back at your work before submitting it for assessment, do you believe that you have demonstrated what follows?

All work is graded and the following grades are used: Distinction, Pass, Fail with opportunity to resubmit or fail. Please see the Performance Descriptors for these grades.

Level Three

Introduction

At Level Three the context is different in terms of continuous length, the detailed exploration of an area of professional practice and the self-direction.

What follows is general guidance relating to the additional Level Three assessment criteria. Please approach this guidance in the same way this it was recommended you treat the guidance for Levels One and Two.

Criterion one

Construction of a principled basis for enquiry

- a) **What** is the purpose of the dissertation (for example to explore an hypothesis/to review.....)?
- b) **How** have you approached the dissertation (for example is your method a combination of or selection from literature Search/survey/questionnaire/interviews/historical Background/analysis/review/assessment/evaluation)?
- c) **Why** is/are the method(s) you have chosen the best for your purpose?

Criterion two

Construction of an appropriate literature base

- a) **What** is the relevant literature for this dissertation (it might include academic writings, official governmental documentation, school based and personal professional material)?
- b) **Why** do you believe it is relevant and appropriate?
- c) **How** do you intend to use it (for example to make clear the theory/to reflect critically upon theory in a specific professional context/to show gaps, deficiencies or inconsistencies in the literature)?

NOTE:

- 1 **remember** the advice given to you on citation and bibliography;
- 2 **plagiarism** means a **fail** so acknowledge your sources;
- 3 **always** make clear the status of any opinion or fact you introduce (for example are you quoting somebody who has carried out empirical research or somebody who was merely expressing an opinion)?

Criterion three

Identification and use of key concepts and general principles

- a) Have you **signalled** to the reader what these are and where they come from (e.g. academic writings, governmental publications, action research)?
- b) Have you **used** them to construct an argument (by, for e.g. analysing a survey or piece of writing to show what concepts emerge from it and what they mean)?

Criterion four

How key concepts and general principles relate to evidence

- a) Have you **connected** ideas and evidence (either evidence from your reading or empirical evidence which you have collected)?
- b) Can you **justify** conclusions you have drawn?
- c) Can you **explain** why and where evidence does or does not support conclusions?
- d) Have you made any **claims** which cannot be justified?

Criterion five

Ability to relate, where appropriate, specific learning to global

- a) Is your work coherent (for example have you drawn together different pieces of evidence or different arguments and shown how they do or don't relate to one another)?
- b) Have you made clear the wider context in which your dissertation belongs (for example the socio-political context/the relationship between one

- professional role and another/the relationship between one theory and others)?
- c) Can you apply the conclusions drawn from the study of a particular case to the wider context?

Criterion six

Development of a clear and coherent style, including the use of argument and use of pertinent examples

- a) Is your **meaning** clear?
- b) Can others follow the **structure** of the dissertation?
- c) Are your **arguments** supported?

Criterion seven

Independent enquiry and thought

In your writing, do you provide evidence of your own thinking by, for example,

- a) **explaining** why you believe the title to be important or significant;
- b) clearly **acknowledging** your own ideas, questions, data collection, conclusions;
- c) **indicating** the ways in which your own approaches and thinking differ from or are similar to those of other authors?

Criterion eight

Critical analysis and synthesis

- a) **Having** applied the methods you chose to use (criterion one), have you analysed the information which has emerged?
- b) **Does** your analysis make comparative links between, for example, past and present, theory and practice, the nature of strength of evidence?
- c) **Can** you point to any factors which are crucial in, for example, determining socio-educational outcomes?
- d) **Have** you shown how different theories or ideas may or may not be combined to form a coherent view or body of opinion?

Criterion nine

Ability to put forward conclusions and recommendation for policy and/or practice

- a) **Does** your dissertation arrive at supported conclusions which relate to your agreed area of professional study?
- b) **Do** you make recommendations for policy or practice which are securely grounded in the study you have undertaken?

Performance Descriptors for Post Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Master of Education

(These performance descriptors apply to all criteria at all Three Levels)

FAIL

Low input of effort and superficial write-up conveying little of the context or value of the work.

Subject to the approval of the examiners, students may be allowed one re-submission (except in cases of plagiarism where re-submission of work will not be allowed).

FAIL WITH OPPORTUNITY TO RESUBMIT

Work which shows insufficient evidence of engagement with appropriate criteria, (for example, inadequately structured response to assignments, serious omission, failure to link the general to the particular, insufficient scope, unclear or unsupported conclusion or resolution) but which is capable, with modification, of reaching a pass standard.

PASS

Work which demonstrates clear engagement with appropriate criteria: for example, appropriate structure and scope and a clear and supported conclusion or resolution.

DISTINCTION

Work which , in addition to demonstrating clear engagement with appropriate criteria, demonstrates, for example, original skill/knowledge/understanding, interestingly lateral thinking, exposition of significant relationships, general principles, abstract concepts and an awareness of how the different components of the subject may be synthesised.