

IDSC MA Project Grading Rubric (Pass with Distinction, High Pass, Pass, Fail)

The criteria and rubric for grading IDSC Final Projects below were collectively drafted by IDSC Program Committee and accepted on 5 November 2008. [IDSC Final Project guidelines](#) lines and other information about the IDSC MA program are in the [IDSC MA Student Handbook](#). Updated versions of both are available on the IDSC website.

After a [final workshop](#) with the faculty reader (or with two readers in the case of a MA thesis) the IDSC faculty reader evaluates the quality of the overall MA project, and makes a recommendation for final evaluation to the IDSC Program Committee. The evaluations are *Pass with Distinction (for truly exceptional work, top 5% of students ever taught)*, *High Pass*, *Pass*, and *Fail*) The IDSC Program Committee may decide to withhold the final evaluations until necessary revisions are made within a time limit. The deadline for submitting the final paper is one week before the university deadlines for spring graduation (last week of March).

The evaluation of the IDSC final MA Project (**research paper** or **thesis**) will consider whether the project accomplishes the following objectives:

1. Addresses a clear and manageable question or problem in the field of international development and social change
2. Articulates a clear thesis statement or analytic argument in relation to that problem and sustains it throughout the paper
3. Locates the topic within the key debates and literature in the field of IDSC
4. Describes the research methodology clearly. That is, indicates what constitutes the principal data or evidence of the work, how the data was collected (from primary or secondary sources), and how it was used to address the central research question.
5. Draws on relevant data to systematically develop the project's central argument with supporting evidence.
6. Concludes with insightful and possibly original contributions to address the project's central question or problem.
7. Is written in a style that reflects professional or graduate-level standards and contains a correctly and consistently formatted bibliography.

The evaluation of the IDSC final MA **practitioner report** will consider whether the report accomplishes the following objectives:

1. Fulfills the expectations laid out in the terms of reference.
2. Contains a concise executive summary describing the development problem or project tackled.
3. Makes clear the appropriate institutional, historical, geographic context, such that it is understandable by any development practitioner.
4. Describes the work carried out and how it contributed to solving the problem defined.
5. Shows evidence of how new ideas, theories, or skills learned were put into practice. If the work is part of a team project, clarifies his/her role and contribution to the team's work.
6. Concludes with specific, but realistic recommendations.
7. Contains appropriate annexes that show:
 - A. Written evidence of how the report has been presented by the development organization, for example, a cover letter, copy of a powerpoint presentation, or a transcript of oral presentation,
 - B. *And/or* any feedback received from the organization in response to the work conducted.
 - C. If the report is part of a team project, the report itself or its annexes should clearly describe the role and contribution of each student.

Pass with Distinction is granted to those candidates whose performance is superior or extraordinary in all of the above areas and is in the top 5% of former and current IDSC students, and if the MA project draft presented at the working session requires only minimal revision.

Additional guidelines that might be helpful are:

- The student showed extraordinary initiative and originality during the project.
- The student's performance in the working session was superior.
- The final project is clearly in the top 5 % of IDSC MA projects

High Pass is awarded to students whose MA project is good in all the above areas. A Final Project that is outstanding in a few of the above areas, but not in most or all, should be awarded a *High Pass* rather than *Pass with Distinction*.

Pass is awarded to those MA final Projects that are adequate, but not up to the standards of *High Pass*. This includes MA projects that may be good in a few of the above areas but only adequate in the others. MA projects earning *Pass* may be characterized by:

- Acceptable research but writing quality and style do not reflect professional or graduate-level standards
- Acceptable presentation of MA project but significant (and correctable) problems in argumentation or research
- Adequate content and writing but that lacking in depth or originality
- Student need extensive supervision and support from faculty reader
- A need for significant revisions, which must be approved by the faculty reader, or one that did not take into account feedback provided by faculty reader.
- A weak performance in the working session with faculty reader

Fail is for work that is unacceptable in most or all of the above areas. Very few Clark IDSC MA projects are failed.

MA Final Project Evaluation Checklist (Optional):

Initiative and Self-direction

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____

Topic Quality and Originality

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____

Research quality and Originality

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____

Writing Style/Quality

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____

Workshop

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____

Other _____

- X Superior
- X Good
- X Weak
- X _____