

Word Count Range and Marking of Over-length Coursework Policy

This policy relates to taught students and regulations must be read in conjunction with the *Taught Degree Regulations*.

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1. **Scope of the policy**

The policy set out in this regulation covers modules assessed wholly or partly by coursework. It covers coursework of all sorts, including essays, extended essays, reports, independent study projects and dissertations.

2. **Word limits**

The word limit prescribed for each piece of assessed coursework is a maximum. Assessments are designed to enable students to achieve excellent marks without writing to the limit. There is consequently no specific penalty for work that is under-length. Under-length work is dealt with by the normal provisions of the marking scheme.

3. **Provision of a word count**

Students must provide an accurate word count on their assignment for all coursework submitted for assessment. As such, the recommendation is that Microsoft Word is used to determine the word count. Examiners will normally give students the benefit of the doubt and will regard small undeclared over-runs as genuine errors of calculation, but significant inaccuracies in declared word counts will be treated as an offence under the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

4. **Definition of word count and word range.**

Word count is defined as the number of words contained within the main body of the text which include: titles, headings, abstracts, summaries, in-text citations, quotations, footnotes.

Items excluded from the word count are as follows: acknowledgements, tables of contents, a list of acronyms, a glossary, a list of tables, or figures. Appendices will not normally be marked but they must not include material essential to the argument developed in the main body of the work. Bibliographies are also not included in the word count.

Written assignments or assessments may be subject to either a word count or a word range limit. The purpose of a word count/range is part of the assessment itself – to ensure students can produce a piece of academic writing that conforms to the specifications of the assessment task. This will be specified in a module's briefing paper or BLE page.

The word count or word range is regulated and is the responsibility of the module convenor for the module undertaken. **Module convenors may choose at their discretion whether to use a word count or a word range policy for assessment elements of individual modules.** Any amendments to assessment elements relating to word counts, subsequent to the initial setting, must be agreed by a department's Learning & Teaching meetings in line with the regular processes for module-level amendments and then noted by the Curriculum Quality Assurance Committee in line with other standard module amendments.

Word counts

Where an assignment has a word count, the briefing paper and/or any briefing materials will indicate if an assessment is defined by word count specifically. A student will not exceed the given word count figure by a total of under or over 10% the given word count figure. This figure will include quotations, footnotes, titles, abstracts, summaries. Where a student exceeds the published word count above for an assessment, the assessment will be subject to a

marks' penalty detailed below. Feedback will be provided on the assessment up to the limit of the word count.

Word Ranges

Where an assessment has a word range, the briefing paper and/or any briefing materials will indicate if an assessment is defined by word range specifically. The word range will be a figure that a student's assessed writing must fall within. Any word figure between the upper number and lower number of the word range will conform to the assessment criteria. This figure will include quotations, footnotes, titles, abstracts and summaries.

Items excluded from the word range are as follows: acknowledgements, tables of contents, a list of acronyms, a glossary, a list of tables, or figures. Appendices will not normally be marked but they must not include material essential to the argument developed in the main body of the work. Bibliographies are also not included in the word count.

Where a student exceeds the published word range above for an assessment, the assessment will be subject to a marks' penalty detailed below. Feedback will be provided on the assessment up to the limit of the word count.

5. Special provisions

Where work is expected to include significant amounts of non-textual content (e.g. musical or mathematical notation or linguistic structure diagrams), specific word count guidance will be provided for each assignment. Where work is expected to include the presentation of foreign language material with significant use of interlinear glosses and idiomatic translations, specific word count guidance will be provided for each assignment.

6. Penalties for over-length coursework.

Marks will be deducted for work that exceeds the prescribed word limit. The reduced mark will be entered onto the record of results on the student database. The deductions for over-length work are as follows:

<u>Excess Length</u>	<u>Mark deduction</u>
More than 10% up to and including 20%	10 percentage points
More than 20% up to and including 30%	15 percentage points
More than 30%	The work will be assigned a grade of 0.

7. Resubmission of coursework that has been subject to a penalty for being over-length and late

7.1 Over-length coursework for which the mark after penalty is the minimum pass mark (40 undergraduate; 50 postgraduate) or more may not be revised and resubmitted.

7.2 Over-length coursework for which the mark after penalty is less than the minimum pass mark (39 or less for undergraduate; 49 or less for postgraduate) may not be revised and resubmitted if the module for which it forms a part has been passed.

7.3 Normal resit requirements apply to over-length coursework for which the mark after penalty is less than the minimum pass mark (39 or less for undergraduate; 49 or less for postgraduate) and the module of which it forms a part has been failed overall.

- 7.4 Resubmission will be at the next available opportunity as outlined in the [Taught Degree Regulations](#).
- 7.5 Capping of the overall mark for the module at the minimum pass mark will apply as appropriate.

8. Coursework subject to a penalty for being over-length and late

If coursework is over-length and submitted late, the deduction of marks for over-length work will be applied first and the penalty for late submission will be applied second. If, as a result, the coursework mark is less than the minimum pass mark (39 or less for undergraduate; 49 or less for postgraduate) then if resubmission is permitted the coursework must be on a new topic.

Document Version

Valid from	Author	Changes	Published
2015/16	John Peck, Head of Registry and Quality, Jenni Rhodes, Quality Assurance Manager	Policy removed from the Taught Degree Regulations. Approved by LTQC on 03.06.2015.	3 June 2015
2015/16	Eva Peters, Curriculum & Regulations Officer	Correction of section 8 to include information omitted from previous version (“...then if resubmission is permitted coursework must be on a new topic”). Approved by LTQC on 03.02.2016.	15 February 2016
2018/19	Eva Peters, Curriculum & Regulations Officer	Terminology updates in line with restructuring. Approved by LTQC 29.05.2018.	July 2018
2018/19	Richard Appleby, Interim Quality Assurance Manager	The policy has been revised to indicate that assignments will give either a maximum word count which should not be exceeded, or a word range within which word counts should fall (4).	August 2019
2018/2019	Nadja Abia, Curriculum & Regulations Officer	The penalty of 5 marks for excess length up to and including 10% has been removed (6).	August 2019