Assessment Content Limit Policy

Student and Academic Services – September 2022

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Purpose of the assessment content limit policy

This policy applies to all students following programmes of study leading to a UWE Bristol award.

The purpose of word counts and assessment limits is to give all students across the University a clear indication of the maximum length of a piece of assessed work. A limit should provide guidance on the amount of work expected, how much detail they should go into and how they should allocate time to one piece of assessed work in relation to others. Word counts and assessment limits are set appropriate to the learning outcomes.

Writing to set limits is an academic skill which students are expected to develop and demonstrate. An adherence to word, time or page limits is a requirement within some professions.

Content limits in assessments

Assessment content limits are set aligned to the approved Module Specification. Students should ensure that any work submitted does not exceed a content limit that has been set.

Some modules and programmes will have word count limits whereas others will have alternative content limit types, such as page limits for portfolios and time limits for audio/visual submission. If an executive summary or abstract is required, then a separate word count may be specified.

'Words' that should be counted

Where a word count is set, this is defined as any and all words included in the text of the assessment (counted electronically). The word count will INCLUDE all text, including (but not limited to):

- the main body of text (including headings)
- all citations (both in and out of brackets)
- text boxes
- tables and graphs
- figures and diagrams
- quotes
- lists

'Words' that should not be counted

The only words EXCLUDED from the word count will be:

- assessment title

- the reference list/ bibliography

- appendices (including multimedia)

- headers and footers

- the abstract (if applicable)

- footnotes and endnotes (unless it is clearly stated in the assessment brief that the module is an exception to this)[1]

More information on referencing and which type to use can be found online.

Appendices should be kept to a minimum and only contain reference materials illustrating and supporting arguments fully made in the main body of the work. Any other materials included in appendices, except where specifically requested in the coursework instructions, will not be marked.

Word processing tools

Students should be aware that word counting tools may count words differently according to file format and submission package. Students should be clear about the words that are/are not included in the electronic count they use.

Text within images (such as an image of a table) may contribute to the word count if it adds substance to the assessment. This may not automatically show up in a word processing programme and therefore it will be the student's responsibility to ensure this is included in the overall word count.

Stating the word or assessment count

Students should state the length of the assessment (such as word count, length of audio, page count) in accordance with the instructions issued by the assessment brief, for example on the title page or cover sheet of their submitted work.

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[1] *Provided footnotes and endnotes only include references.*

Verifying a word count during the marking process

All written submissions will be eligible to have their word count verified. Where there is any concern that a word limit has been exceeded and/or inaccurately declared, the word count of that submission will be checked. Word counts will be verified from the electronic file submitted for marking and may be verified by submission programmes such as Turnitin, or by word processing software, such as MS Word.

Failing to provide a word count or providing an inaccurate word count

Where students deliberately fail to provide a word count or are found to have intentionally provided an inaccurate word count, this constitutes an assessment offence and may result in further action.

Where a student has clearly abused the spirit of the assessment limit restriction, the assessment will be treated in the same way as if the limit in the assessment had been exceeded (see below).

Assessments which exceed the assessment or word limit

Students who exceed the prescribed assessment limit will have their work assessed but markers will stop marking when the assessment exceeds the maximum limit set.

Markers will indicate the point at which the limit is reached and beyond that that point no marks will be awarded and no feedback provided for that section of work.

Although no formal penalty is applied, failing to concisely communicate ideas may result in lower marks, for example where there is insufficient information to meet the learning outcomes, or the conclusion of an assessment cannot be marked as it is beyond the assessment limit.