

# Policy on word count

## Purpose of word count limit

The purpose of a word limit is to give all **students**, across the University, a clear indication of the maximum length of a piece of assessed written work, the amount of work expected and therefore how much detail they should go into and how they should allocate time to one piece of assessed work in relation to others. Writing to set word limits is a skill required within some professions, as well as an academic skill. Word limits are set appropriate to the assessment outcomes.

## Setting a word count limit

- The policy is that the coursework instructions for all levels<sup>1</sup> within the module handbook will clearly state a maximum word count beyond which nothing will be marked. This maximum will include any margin for tolerance which has been set (i.e. a word count with +10% tolerances), if your module guide does not state that 10% tolerance will be given then it does not exist for that module.
- If an executive summary or abstract is required then a separate word count for this should be specified.

## What is included in the word count?

Word count includes *everything* in the main body of the text (including headings, tables, citations, quotes, lists, etc).

The list of references, appendices and footnotes<sup>2</sup> are NOT included in the word count unless it is clearly stated in the coursework instructions that the module is an exception to this rule.

There are two standard referencing systems<sup>3</sup>:

- UWEHarvard: [www.uwe.ac.uk/referencing/uweharvard](http://www.uwe.ac.uk/referencing/uweharvard)
- Bristol Law School OSCOLA (Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities)<sup>4</sup>

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.

## Interpretation of the word count policy for students and staff

### Penalty for exceeding the word limit

There is no regulatory/mandatory penalty for exceeding the word count **but** students should be aware that the marker will not include any work after the maximum word limit has been reached within the allocation of marks. Students may therefore be penalised for a failure to be concise and for failing to conclude their work within the word limit specified. Likewise, a failure to meet the maximum word limit

---

<sup>1</sup> Coursework is classed as a written assignment, essay, portfolio or report; it is recognised that there are other forms of written assessment which may not fit into this category and therefore will not be subject to the word count policy, for example production files

<sup>2</sup> Module handbooks will detail if other referencing systems should be used.

<sup>3</sup> Provided footnotes only include references

<sup>4</sup> OSCOLA should only be used for students of the Bristol Law School

may result in lower marks based on the quality of the work because they may not have included the necessary information required for the assessment and met the stated learning outcomes.

The word count needs to be clearly and correctly stated on the title page of the assignment. Incorrectly understating the word count constitutes an assessment offence and may result in further action.

***May 2012***

***Revised October 2013***