



Word Limits Policy

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1 Northumbria University Policy on Word Limits

Policy (2017/18) to apply to all modules for which the assessment is a written sub-mission and is awarded a mark i.e. to exclude pass/fail modules, MPhil and doctoral dissertations.

- 1.1 Programme teams should agree whether a word limit for each assessment component is a guideline, for example in portfolios where different forms of evidence is included, or whether a student's ability to write within the word limit is actually part of the assessment of the piece of work concerned. This information should be included in the module's written assessment information and discussed with students at the commencement of the module. This policy removes the need for an allocation of marks for adherence to a word count within individual module marking schemes.
- 1.2 For those assessments where students are required to keep to the word limit, it is proposed that they should be informed that the marker will stop reading at the point when they judge that the word limit exceeds the recommended word count by more than 10%. The marker will indicate the point at which they stop reading on the text.
- 1.3 A consistent, programme wide approach should identify which elements the word count includes – for example:
 - The abstract if applicable
 - The main body of text
 - In text citations [e.g. (Smith, 2011)]
 - Direct quotations from primary or secondary source material
 - Title & Contents page
 - Tables, figures, illustrations and footnotes
 - Reference list
 - Bibliography
 - Appendices
 - Glossary
 - Footnotes

This information should be included in the module's written assessment information and should be discussed with students at the commencement of the module.



1.4 The actual word count is to be declared on the front of the assessment submission

Under the word limit	No Penalty: In not making use of the full word count, students may have self-penalised their work. If students have been able to achieve the requirements of the assessment using fewer words than allocated, they will not be penalised.
Up to 10% over word limit	No Penalty: Situation flagged by tutor in feedback but over-run is tolerated and no deduction is made from the final mark.
More than 10% over the word limit	<p>The marker will stop reading when they judge that the word count exceeds the recommended word count by more than 10% i.e. for a 3000 word essay, the marker will read only the first 3300 words and will indicate on the text where they stop reading.</p> <p>The content following this point will not be read and a mark will be awarded only for the content up to this point.</p>