



QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 87 – PENALTIES FOR EXCEEDING ASSESSMENT WORD LIMITS

This policy applies to all fine graded assessments that include a specific word count as defined within the module descriptor.

Assessment Word Limits

Writing within a word limit is an important academic skill and demonstrates the ability to synthesise information from a variety of sources and write concisely to make a point in as few words possible, avoiding the use of unnecessary material.

Each assessment brief will include clear information on the maximum length of the assessment, as well as an indication of the level of detail required, and how much time to allocate to each written task.

There is no minimum word count, however assessments that are significantly below the word count are unlikely to contain the level of breadth and depth required and will be reflected in the mark awarded.

Students are responsible for ensuring that work submitted complies with the assessment word limit and must declare the word count on their assessment front cover sheet. Word count declarations shall be checked by the marker where it appears that an incorrect word count has been stated. In such cases, students must provide a copy of their work in a format that can be checked such as Word or Excel if required. Where it is suspected that a student has intentionally stated an incorrect word count to gain an unfair advantage, this may be investigated in accordance with the University's Academic Integrity and Misconduct policy.

What's Included in the Word Count?

The word count includes everything in the main body of the assessment (including in text citations and references).

Unless otherwise stated on the assessment brief, the word count excludes:

- Numerical Data in Tables
- Figures
- Diagrams
- Footnotes
- Reference list
- Appendices



Penalties for Exceeding Word Limits

Students who exceed the wordcount up to a 10% margin will not be penalised.

A 10-percentage point deduction will be applied to assessments that exceed the word count by more than 10%.

Penalties must not take the student's grade below the minimum pass mark. Where a 10-percentage point deduction reduces the grade beyond the minimum pass mark, the grade will be capped at the minimum pass mark (40% for UG programmes, and 50% PG programmes)

Penalties will be applied to the overall assessment mark (or overall assessment component mark for multipart assessments) and not to individual tasks within an assessment.

Policy Name:	Word Count Policy
Policy Reference:	QA87
Approval Authority:	Quality and Standards Committee
Last Approved:	August 2021
Responsible SMT Lead:	Academic Registrar
Responsible Department:	Academic Affairs
Policy Contact:	Joanne Walker, Head of Quality (jwalker@arden.ac.uk)
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