

Word Count Guidelines

Preamble

These Word Count Guidelines are pursuant to the overarching word count policy.

<http://www.med.monash.edu.au/policies/assessment-word-limit-policy.html>

Purpose

The Word Count Guidelines are designed to:

- Highlight issues relating to what is reasonably included in a word count

Word Counts

The purpose of a word count is to give all students, across the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, an indication of the maximum number of words to be used in any written work. This will also indicate to the student the amount of work expected and how much detail is required. It is also helpful in giving students an awareness of how much time to allocate to one piece of assessed work in relation to others. Being able to write in a specified word limit is a powerful skill in both the professional and academic setting. Word counts within the faculty are set to an appropriate limit and are matched to assessment outcomes for individual units.

The Monash Policy listed above states that a student is permitted to submit an assessment item 10% over the stated word limit, however, if the assessment item exceeds 10% the content will not be read by the examiner (excludes tables, appendices and references). Students are required to submit the word limit of their assessment item upon submission.

What should a word count include?

In most cases any text within the body of a text are counted as part of the word count for assessment purposes. The marker of the assessment will include all words from the introduction through to the conclusion.

In some cases the assessment task may require a writer to use diagrams, tables, maps, and/or visual images. These may be placed in an appendix or at appropriate points in the essay. These should be labelled as appropriate and as indicated in assignment instructions. All visual material should be captioned appropriately and clearly. In this case the captions should not count towards the overall word count, unless otherwise specified in the assignment directions.

A word count does not include the following:

- Title/question page
- Contents page (if required)
- Reference list or bibliography
- Footnotes that are used to list author, date, and page numbers
- Appendices
- Tables
- Figures and legends

The word count should include:

- Headings
- Sub-headings
- In-text citations (refer to in-text citation information below)
- In-text referencing (used to list author, date, year and page numbers)
 - Eg...the results were inconclusive (Hawkins, 2003).

Title Pages, Abstracts and Summary Pages

At times it may be necessary to have a title page, abstract or summary page. These items should not be included in the word count. In some cases an abstract or summary page may have their own word count, however, this is rarely added to the word count for the rest of the assessment.

Headings and Sub-headings

The word count includes all words within the body of the assessment task as stated above. Headings and sub-headings are included in the body of a text and are acceptable as part of a word count.

Data, Tables and Graphs

In some cases the assessment task may require a writer to use diagrams, tables, maps, and/or visual images. These may be placed in an appendix or at appropriate points in the essay. These should be labelled as appropriate and as indicated in assignment instructions. All visual material should be captioned appropriately and clearly. In this case the captions should not count towards the overall word count, unless otherwise specified in the assignment directions.

An appendix is not the place to argue or make your point clear and therefore they should not contain anything other than captions or writing that is imperative to understanding the diagram. Unless otherwise clearly stated in the unit handbook appendices should not be included in the word count.

In-text citations

An in-text citation is used in two ways; a direct quote or a paraphrase of someone else's work. An In-text citation falls within the body of the work and is usually included in the word count.

Direct Quotes

Direct quotes are included in the word count as they are in the body of the assessment. University writing requires that a paper should be written in the student's own words, however, direct quotes can be used if the student has good reason to use them. Depending on the type of assignment a direct quote can support an argument and be used to show that an authority supports your point.

Direct quotes should be used very sparingly and therefore should not account for a large amount of the word count. If there is overuse of direct quotes Turnitin will pick up the similarity and flag as potential plagiarism.

Block Quotes

Block quotes are used for quotes that are generally over 40 words. Block Quotes should be discouraged and students should be encouraged to reduce the quote into smaller portions of the text to incorporate their own voice. When block quotes are overused it generally gives the impression that the writer is trying to fill out a paper to meet a word count.

While they are acceptable to use they should be avoided by the student and paraphrased or summarized into smaller in-text citations or direct quotes.

Footnotes

Much like appendices footnotes are not normally included in the word count. Generally, footnotes should only be used to give citation information. At times other brief information may be required but this should be kept to a minimum. Sometimes there may need to be a more extensive explanation within a footnote provided it is necessary. In this case a footnote could be included as additional words in a word count.

* Word does not include footnotes in the final Word count.

Appendices

Appendices may only be necessary in some assessment tasks. If appendices are being used they should be kept to a minimum and only used if and when they support the argument the writer is trying to make. Appendices are not the place to argue your point and therefore should not contain a lot of words. Materials and writing in the appendices should not be included in the final word count.

Unless otherwise clearly stated in the unit handbook appendices should not be included in the word count.

References

References should not be included in the word count. A reference list or bibliography that is required for an assessment task is not included in the word-count, but will be assessed for accuracy and consistency.

References

Assessment Word Limit Policy. (2016). [Med.monash.edu.au](http://www.med.monash.edu.au). Retrieved 11 May 2016, from <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/policies/assessment-word-limit-policy.html>

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