Assessment Length Policy

2025/26

Contents

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1. Prose

Oak Hill College sets word limits for all written assignments in order to maintain clarity, fairness, and consistency in assessment. Word limits ensure parity between students by providing each one with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills within the same parameters. They also encourage the development of clear, concise and focused communication, which is an essential skill for ministry and scholarship. Word limits enable module tutors to assess work within the standard marking time and in accordance with agreed expectations, ensuring that feedback can both be timely and constructive.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all summative assessments submitted by any student enrolled on a Common Awards programme at the College where a formal word limit has been specified. It covers all forms of written coursework, including essays, reports, case studies, reflective pieces, and any other assignments where a word limit is part of the assessment requirements.

For formative assignments, this policy should be treated as guidance only. Word limits for formative work are not enforced in the same way and will not result in penalties, although students are encouraged to practise working within them.

Equivalent rules may apply to non-written assessments (e.g., presentations, recorded submissions); see Section 8 for details.

3. Word Count Parameters

The word count for each assignment is determined according to the following inclusions and exclusions.

3.1 Included in the word count

- Assignment titles (when placed outside the document header, as per the *Coursework Submission Template* under Acorn → Study → Policies & Forms)
- Any headings or subheadings within the main body of text

- If a diagram contains a significant amount of text and/or includes information integral to the argument (that is, information not presented elsewhere in the main body), the words within the diagram must be included in the overall word count. Where this is not the case, it may be more appropriate to place the diagram in an appendix and provide a reference to it in the main text. Markers retain discretion to determine whether the allowance for diagrams in the main text is being used appropriately or misused..
- All text from the start of the introduction to the end of the conclusion
- In-text citations and quotations

3.2 Excluded from the word count

- Abstracts (where applicable)
- Footnotes
- Bibliographies or reference lists
- Appendices
- Presentation sheets (e.g., contents pages, coursework cover sheets, title pages, prefaces, abbreviations lists, etc.)

3.3 Measuring the word count

The word count will be measured using the standard word count function in the file format required for submission (e.g., MS Word). The total word count must be included in every assignment submission on the '*Coursework Submission Template*' which can be found on Acorn→*Study*→*Policies & Forms.*

4. *Word Count Range and Penalties*

4.1 Word Count Limit

Students are expected to adhere to the specified word limit for each assessment task. There is a 10% tolerance above the limit before penalties apply, but this should be regarded primarily as a protective margin to guard against accidental breaches, not as a purposeful extension of the limit itself. Work that exceeds this 10% allowance will be subject to penalties, as outlined in section 4.2 below.

4.2 Penalties for Exceeding the Word Limit

Submissions exceeding the permitted 10% tolerance above the stated word limit will incur penalties. The scale of deductions is determined by the extent to which the word limit is exceeded, as outlined below:

- More than 10% up to and including 20% - 10 points mark deduction
- More than 20% up to and including 30% - 20 points mark deduction
- More than 30% up to and including 40% - 30 points mark deduction
- More than 40% up to and including 50% - 40 points mark deduction
- More than 50% overlength - fail.

In the case of overlength penalties and late submission penalties applying to the same piece of assessed work, only a single penalty will be awarded (whichever is greater).

4.3 Under-Length Submissions

The College does not apply a separate academic penalty for work that falls below the stated word limit. However, students should be aware that submitting work significantly under the word limit may reduce the scope and depth of their answer, which in turn may prevent them from meeting the marking criteria and learning outcomes. This will be reflected in a lower mark and, in some cases, may result in the work failing to achieve a passing standard.

5. *Application to Non-Written Work*

For non-written assessments (e.g., oral presentations, video submissions, recorded performances), a strict time or size limit will be set equivalent to the word limits used for written work. Penalties, as outlined in section 4.1 for over-length work, will be applied in the same way, but only if the work exceeds the stated limit by more than 10%. Module tutors may provide further format-specific guidance on over-length submissions, which will be published in the Assessments tab of the relevant Moodle site.

Author	**Acting Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning)** **Academic Registrar**
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