Department of English Guidance on Word Length and Plagiarism

Taught Postgraduate Programmes (MA and MFA)

This document explains the application of penalties with regard to the work you submit. All your tutors/markers use this guidance along with grade descriptors and assessment criteria when arriving at a mark for your work. Further information about marking and assessment criteria is available on Moodle and in your unit and student handbooks. Please read this document carefully.

Over-length work

Critical essays and creative prose assignments have a started word count; creative poetry assignments will have an equivalent line count, and creative script/audio/video assignments a stated running time. Written work that exceeds the stated count is viewed as a form of rubric violation. When we set an assignment with a particular count we are assessing how well you are able to construct and develop an argument, or compose a creative piece, within a given limit. For this reason, markers will apply the following penalties to over-length work:

Amount the submitted work is in excess of the provided guidance and effect on final mark

- 0% - 10%      None
- 11% - 30%     Mark reduced by 10%
- >31%          Mark capped at 50%

Footnotes and quotations are included within the count, but your bibliography is not. In the case of Dissertations or Projects, the word count does not include the abstract or title pages. Footnotes should generally be used only for referencing your sources, rather than for discussion, and will therefore rarely constitute a large portion of your overall count.

Referencing and Bibliography

The Department of English requires all its students to learn and to use Harvard or MHRA style in the production of written work. Please note that:

- Accurate and consistent use of the style is a requirement of distinction and merit-level critical work. This means that any student who does not use or make a good attempt to use Harvard or MHRA style accurately cannot achieve a mark above 59%.
- Marks in the 50-59% range will be considered for critical work that makes some effort to adhere to a recognisable scholarly style but does not always do this accurately or consistently.
• Critical work that fails to provide any references, a bibliography or to observe any recognisable scholarly style will be deemed not to meet the threshold standards for a pass at degree level and will be given a mark below 50%.

• Bibliographies should be a list of WORKS CITED, not works consulted. Works cited means that you must list all the texts to which you refer in your coursework (ie the sources of the quotations, ideas and information referenced in your footnotes). Strictly speaking, all sources that impact on your own writing should be referenced in your footnotes, and all the sources you footnote should appear in your bibliography.

Poor Scholarly Practice/ “Crass Derivation”

Crass Derivation refers to written work that comprises material that has been cited (enclosed in quotation marks and acknowledged in a reference) but which has been cut and pasted from a website or taken from a book without any effort or intellectual engagement on the part of the student. Depending on the degree of crass derivation, work of this kind may be deemed not to meet the threshold standards for a pass at degree level. Students must ensure that they develop their own ideas and arguments in their written work.

Plagiarism

All students should read the University regulations relating to plagiarism: http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/casqe/regulations/assessment/docs/academic-misconduct.pdf from which the information below is taken.

Offences relating to assessed work other than written examinations, many of which will be regarded as plagiarism, include, but are not limited to, the following:

• unacknowledged incorporation of another person’s work;
• unacknowledged summarising of another person’s work;
• unacknowledged and/or unauthorised use of the ideas of another person;
• copying the work of another person with or without that person’s knowledge or agreement and presenting it as one’s own;
• the representation of another person’s work, without acknowledgement of the source, as one’s own;
• the presentation of data in reports, projects, research degree theses etc based on experimental work falsely purported to have been carried out by the student, falsified data or data obtained by unfair means;
• the submission as entirely his/her own of collaborative work;
• the completion of work with another person which is intended to be submitted as a candidate’s own unaided work;
• actions which enable another student to access / copy all or part of his / her own work and to submit it as that student’s own unaided work;
• the use of third parties and/or websites to attempt to buy assessments or answers to questions set;
• gaining access to any unauthorised material relating to an assessment prior to the release date of such information;
• using materials created by others and passed off as the student’s own, including all forms of contract cheating, such as the use and running of, or participation in, auction sites and essay mills;
• the inclusion in coursework of any material which is identical or similar to material which has already been submitted for any other assessment within the University or elsewhere, for example, submitting the same piece of coursework for two different units;
• the provision of falsified information that has the potential to give a student an unfair advantage.