

15 06 12

**School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
Student Guidance on Contact Hours,
Assessment Loads and Word Limits (UG)**

(a) General Principles on Workloads and Weighting

The School of Arts, Languages and Cultures is committed to ensuring that the workloads for its programmes and course units are equitable and balanced. To that end, all undergraduate programmes and course units should follow the principles set out in this document. As well as specifying the contact hours students can expect to receive, it sets out a framework for calculating assessment loads and the weightings for different forms of assessment.

A 20 credit unit equates to 200 notional hours of learning. This figure and the following breakdown should inform the design of course unit curricula and assessment tasks:

- 40 hours teaching contact (30 hours of class contact plus 10 hours of additional contact through consultation hours, feedback sessions, field trips and so on)
- 40 hours background reading and research
- 60 hours preparation for classes (including studying seminar texts, preparing formative assignments, reviewing lecture notes, and reflecting on learning)
- 60 hours assessment (actual assessment time plus preparation), e.g.
 - 50% examination (2 hour assessment plus 28 hours preparation)
 - 50% 2,000 word essay x 2 (15 hours x 2)

This example assumes a total assessment pot of 8,000 words

A 10-credit unit equates to 100 notional hours of learning:

- 20 hours teaching contact (15 hours of class contact plus 5 hours of additional contact)
- 20 hours background reading and research
- 30 hours preparation for classes
- 30 hours assessment, e.g.
 - 50% examination (1.5 hours assessment plus 13.5 hours preparation)
 - 50% 2,000 word essay x 1 (15 hours x 1)

This example assumes a total assessment pot of 4,000 words

(b) Contact Hours

- UG students have a minimum of 30 hours (normally 33 hours) of timetabled lectures, seminars, tutorials, or equivalent per 20 credit unit
- for each 10 credit unit, UG students have a minimum of 15 hours (normally 17 hours) of timetabled lectures, seminars, tutorials, or equivalent
- each 20 credit course unit includes the opportunity for an average or the equivalent of one additional contact hour per week (half an hour for each 10 credit unit). This may be offered as a designated weekly consultation hour, or made use of more flexibly (e.g. 4 hours of individual essay consultation; 4 hours of individual essay feedback; and 3 hours of revision/exam preparation). These additional hours are intended to support and consolidate the teaching provided in lectures and seminars, rather than to cover new material
- course units are also supported through a range of other kinds of formal or informal contact. Examples include:
 - visits to local art gallery (e.g. FREN 20270)
 - visits to local museums (e.g. SALC 21112)
 - workshops with outside speakers (e.g. music journalist for FREN 30002)
 - one-off sessions to tie in with news events (e.g. coverage of the French elections for FREN 30252)
 - film screenings (e.g. DRAM 31042)
 - rehearsals (e.g. MUSC 20630)
 - field work (e.g. ARGY 10502)
 - master classes (e.g. MUSC 30600)

NB: These will sometimes be offered at programme, discipline, or School level, rather than be attached to a particular course unit

This combination of scheduled contact, flexible consultation hours, and additional activities ensures that SALC meets – and in many cases exceeds – the requirement that all students spend 25% of their time in formal or informal contact, as specified in the Minimum Requirements for Contact Hours in the Faculty of Humanities (April 2012).

Within SALC, students taking three 20 credit units per semester can therefore expect to have a minimum of 12 contact hours per week (9 scheduled hours plus 3 flexible hours available for consultation), that is, 240 hours per year. The following exceptions apply:

- Level 3 dissertations, and some other units involving one-to-one supervision and centring on guided independent learning, may offer fewer contact hours than a standard unit

- for students completing a period of residence abroad, or on placements, the minimum applies only to their time spent studying in Manchester

(C) Policy on Word Limits

The target word length for a written piece is indicative of the optimum length required to compose a successful essay at that level, and is designed to correspond as closely as possible to the weighting that the assessment has within the course unit.

The purpose of enforcing word limits is (a) to ensure parity and fairness by creating a level playing field; (b) to help students produce well-focused and cogent written work; (c) to instil the discipline essential for real-life writing tasks, where word limits are often rigid; and (d) to ensure that students acquire the ability to edit their writing effectively and cut away inessential material, skills invaluable both for academic work and the workplace.

- students must observe the word limit specified for each assessment. **The upper limit is an absolute maximum and must not be exceeded (there is no '10% rule')**
- the word count for each piece of written work must be displayed clearly on the top right-hand side of the first page
- word count is here defined as including quotations and the footnotes or endnotes in the essay itself. It does not include the bibliography or any appendices. Appendices are for supporting, illustrative material only; they may not be used to elaborate or extend the argument
- material that exceeds the upper limit will not be read or considered in the marking

It is not expected that staff will check individual submissions unless they are concerned that the stipulated length has been exceeded. In such cases, markers may request electronic copies of work in order to verify the word count.