Guidelines for word limits in undergraduate and postgraduate assessment

At its meeting of 18 May 2010, the College Education Committee approved the following Guidelines regarding Word Limits in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment.

These Guidelines are intended to be a framework which informs the setting of assessment in CASS. It is recognised that courses which do not have significant components of written assessment may need to adapt these guidelines to their specific pedagogies and learning outcomes.

The Guidelines will come into effect in Semester 2, 2009. The College Education Committee will refer to these when approving new Course proposals and their proposed assessment.

1. Written assessment in a 6-unit undergraduate course will normally be in the range of 4000 to 5000 words, including examinations, or equivalent. This word limit may be increased by 10% to accommodate the use of the Harvard, or other in-text, referencing system in which references are placed in the body of the main text.

2. Written assessment in a 6-unit postgraduate course will normally be in the range of 5000 to 6000 words, including examinations, or equivalent. This may be increased by 10% to accommodate the use of the Harvard, or other in-text, referencing system in which references are placed in the body of the main text.

3. Assessment in double-weighted courses should normally have double the word count.

4. Bibliographies and footnotes using the Oxford (or other end-note or footnote) system of referencing will not be included in the word count, though notes will be assessed to ensure conformity with footnoting and disciplinary conventions.

5. Appendices and tables will not be included in the word count.

6. There should be an appropriate relationship between the word length of a particular piece of assessment and its weighting in the total assessment regime.

7. Where an assignment exceeds the prescribed word length, no penalty will be applied for the initial 10% excess words. Thereafter a 10% penalty will apply.

8. Students will declare the word length, without appendices, bibliography and Oxford-style footnotes on the cover sheet submitted with their assignment.

Professor Joan Beaumont
Chair
CASS Education Committee