CIPD Word Count Policy – January 2023

CIPD provides a word count for each core and pathway assessment. This word count is relative to the credit value of the unit and learners are required to stay within this -/+ 10% and declare their word count on submission of each assessment.

The word count provided for each component of an assessment is provided for guidance only. Learners may choose to allocate the word count differently if they wish, for example, by using more words to answer a question with a higher command verb, such as 'evaluate', and fewer for questions with a lower command verb such as 'explain'. However, we recommend that they remain broadly in line with the suggested word count. Command verbs will differ according to the level of qualification.

Where the learner exceeds the overall word count for the assessment beyond the +10%, the assessment should be rejected for marking, returned to the learner and counted as a refer. Learners will then be allowed to resubmit their assessment in line with the CIPD referral policy.

Where learners submit work that is more than 10% below the guided word count, the assessment should not be rejected for marking. The assessment should be marked in the usual way, but the learner is less likely to be able to demonstrate sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding needed to meet the assessment criteria.

Included within the word count should be any text that is central to a learner's answer, and which responds to and addresses the questions/tasks. Where a learner wishes to present information that is not central to their response, but which underpins and is relevant to it, linked appendices may be provided and will not be counted within the word count. When assessing learner work, the appendices should not be marked but considered as information that supports the learner's submission.

Further information about what is included in, and excluded from, the word count is set out below – the components will vary according to the level of qualification being studied and the question asked. Not all the components are required in every answer.

Assignment components	Included Yes/No
Title page showing learner and centre details	No
Contents Page	No
Introduction	Yes
Titles[1]	Yes
Subtitles [1]	Yes
Headings[1]	Yes
Subheadings[1]	Yes
In-text citations	Yes
Diagrams/Graphs/Charts with key words[2]	No
Tables that include numbers	No
Written narrative embedded in tables	Yes
Conclusion	Yes
Recommendations	Yes
Assessment questions	No
Learning Outcomes in full[3]	No
Assessment Criteria in full[4]	No
Appendices	No
References/Bibliography	No
Punctuation Marks	No

Where learners resubmit work after a referral, they are still required to adhere to the word count policy for the assessment. However, only the assessment criteria on which a learner has been referred should be re-marked.

For centre devised assessments, centres should set a word count limit in line with CIPD's approach which is 3900 words for a 6-credit unit at Associate level and 4000 words for a 15 credit unit at Advanced level and follow the same principles as described above.

[1] Titles and Subtitles; Headings and Subheadings

Some assessments require learners to use titles and subtitles, and/or headings and subheadings, for example Unit 7CO04 where learners are asked to write a business report. However, these can be succinct, for example 'Introduction,' 'Conclusion', 'Recommendation' etc. This also applies to their use in other Units.

[2] Diagrams/Graphs/Charts with keywords

Diagrams/Graphs/Charts with keywords are excluded from the wordcount. Examples of keywords include a small number of words in a box in a diagram or a label for an axis in a graph.

Written narrative and explanatory or accompanying text in a diagram/graph/chart is included in word count.

[3] Learning Outcomes

Our learning assessment briefs for the Advanced Diplomas state that learners 'must demonstrate within the submitted evidence (through headings and subheadings) which learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been cited'. However, if it is clear which learning outcomes and assessment criteria are being addressed, there is no requirement to include them in full. They can be referenced using the number only, for example, 'LO1 - AC2.3'. Headings and subheadings should be succinct – see above.

[4] Assessment Criteria

Learners must make clear which assessment criteria they are addressing in their work. However, there is no requirement to include them in full – they can be referenced using the number only, for example, AC 2.3.