Guidance on word count

In each module, there is usually a word count for assessments. This word count may vary from module to module.

Module Projects including Research Projects (submitted through Turnitin)
Whenever the assessment exceeds the specified word count by more than 10%, a grade reduction will be applied. The word count should include only the main body of the submission and should exclude the reference list/bibliography, appendices and front pages (e.g. the title page, if there is one) but should include all in-text references and any tables or diagrams.

Submissions that greatly fall short of the word count
Normally, if you submit a piece of work for assessment that falls short of the word count by more than 10% you will have missed addressing some of the requirements of the assignment. If the submission falls short of the word count, then perhaps the critical analysis is not sufficiently developed; or you have not used sufficient outside sources in writing your assessment; or you may have not answered all the questions asked in the instructions; or maybe you have not demonstrated in sufficient detail how theory translates into practice, etc.

If you write significantly less than the word count there is a risk that your work will not adequately address the assignment or the learning outcomes. If this is the case, your work will be assessed on its academic merits and the shortcomings will be reflected in the mark awarded and the feedback on the piece of work. There will be no additional penalty applied in these circumstances.

Submissions that greatly exceed the word count
If the submission exceeds the word count by up to 10% then there will be no penalty. Submissions that exceed the word count by more than 10% may be penalised. Penalties will be applied according to the guidance below.

Between 11% and 15%
If the submission exceeds the word count by more than 10% and up to 15%, a discretionary penalty of no more than 5 marks may be applied. The decision to apply a penalty will be made by the assessor based on the academic merit of the piece of work, and this will be reflected in the feedback given.
Between 16% and 40%

If the submission exceeds the word count by more than 15% and up to 40%, then a penalty of 10 marks will be applied by the assessor and this will be reflected in the feedback on the piece of work.

Above 40%

If the submission exceeds the word count by more than 40%, then a penalty of 15 marks will be applied by the assessor and this will be reflected in the feedback on the piece of work.

In all cases, the penalised mark will not be reduced below the pass level, assuming the work merited a pass.

Shared Activities (submitted on the Shared Activity Module Thread)
Initial posts in shared activities often (but not always) have a word count. Occasionally there are also word counts for follow up posts in these activities.

Submissions that greatly fall short of the word count
If you write significantly less than the word count (e.g. if the word count is more than 10% below what is required) there is a risk that your work will not adequately address the assignment or the learning outcomes. Shared activity submissions that greatly fall short of the word count will be given a mark and feedback that reflects the extent to which the student has addressed the assignment and learning outcomes. There will be no additional penalty applied in these circumstances.

Submissions that greatly exceed the word count
If you write significantly more than the word count (e.g. if the word count is more than 10% above what is required) it is likely that you are not demonstrating academic writing skills (in particular the ability to present and argue a case within a defined word count) at a Master’s level. Shared activity submissions that are significantly greater than the word count will be given a mark and feedback that reflects the academic writing skills demonstrated by the student. There will be no additional penalty applied in these circumstances.