



## MEMORANDUM

For examiners assessing written assignments

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### **Guidelines on the formal requirements for written assignments - including assignments exceeding the specified maximum number of pages**

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Prompted by a number of cases, the Dean's Office, Education has had talks with the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation (UI) on how we are to handle written assignments that do not meet the formal requirements, e.g. written assignments exceeding the specified maximum number of pages.

As the rules vary depending on the specific circumstances, and are rather complex in some cases, we have drafted the following guidelines for the examiners. The purpose is to ensure that cases are handled in accordance with UI's guidelines and that practice is, as far as possible, uniform in areas where the decision depends on an assessment.

As a general rule, the Administration sends all assignments submitted within the deadline out for assessment since the competence for assessing whether and how a failure to meet the formal requirements is to be addressed rests with the examiners; however, in compliance with the following principles and rules.

#### **Assignments exceeding the maximum number of pages**

CBS may only reject an assignment which exceeds the maximum number of pages<sup>1</sup> if the number of pages exceeding the specified maximum is large enough to warrant such sanction. In most cases it will be up to the examiners to assess whether an assignment exceeds the maximum number of pages to an extent that warrants rejection of the assignment, and therefore the Administration generally<sup>2</sup> sends all submitted assignments out for assessment. If the examiners subsequently decide (cf. above) that an assignment is to be rejected, they must address the Administration, who will then handle the matter in relation to the student/s.

In the assessment of whether there is cause for rejecting an assignment exceeding the specified maximum number of pages, UI has declared that the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the page count, cf. the appendix

<sup>2</sup> The exception to the rule would be in cases where the specified maximum number of pages has been exceeded to such an extent that the indisputable consequence should be a rejection of the assignment.

examiners are to apply the following two criteria in their assessment: the principle of proportionality and the principle of quality.

*The principle of proportionality* stipulates that the action must be proportionate to the offence (that is, the extent in which the specified maximum number of pages has been exceeded); thus an assessment is to be made of the seriousness of the offence on one hand and the consequence of the intended action on the other (e.g. extension of the study period as a consequence of the assignment being rejected).

*The principle of equality* must be observed in the assessment of the seriousness of the offence. The principle is expressed in a provision in the Examinations Order, which states that the examiners must ensure that "the students are being treated equally and fairly". Thus the examiners must ensure that the students are treated equally and that no students gain an unfair advantage by exceeding the specified maximum number of pages. Therefore the examiners must assess whether a case of exceeding the specified maximum number of pages entails the risk that students who comply with the specified maximum number of pages may be prejudiced compared to students who (contrary to the rules) submit assignments that exceed the specified maximum number of pages. If this is the case, an assessment is to be made of whether the offence is of such nature that the action of rejection is justified.

If the examiners assess that the specified maximum number of pages has not been exceeded to such extent, the assignment must be assessed without consideration to the fact that it exceeds the specified maximum number of pages (i.e. the fact that the specified maximum number of pages has been exceeded cannot result in a lowering of the mark).

Only in very special cases where the objectives of an assignment contains a requirement as to content which explicitly states that the assignment must not exceed a specified maximum, exceeding the specified maximum may affect the marking, as failure to comply with the requirements can be regarded as a 'defect' under the Examinations Order. An example hereof is an examination where the assignment is to submit a summary of a text that has been handed out. In this case, part of the purpose of the examination was demonstrating the ability to prepare the summary within a specified limit.

If the written assignment is part of an examination which also has an oral element (e.g. oral defence), it is important that *a potential rejection of the assignment takes place in due time before the oral examination*. Therefore examiners are advised to commence the assessment of the assignments as soon as possible upon receipt to determine whether there are grounds for rejection.

#### **Other 'defects': summary, declaration of authorship, individualisation, language**

- *Summary*: In cases where the examination regulations for the examination state that the assignment must contain a summary and the summary is missing, the assignment *cannot* be rejected based on this cause. Instead

the examiners are to deem the missing summary a defect in their assessment of the assignment. In a specific case, the UI has thus stated:

"Cases where a bachelor project, a master's thesis or a master's project does not contain a summary are to some extent comparable to a situation where a student participates in a written examination at CBS but fails to hand in all required parts of the assignment. Based on this, UI finds that an assessment must be made in cases where the summary is missing from a bachelor project, a master's thesis or a master's project, which has been handed in for assessment. Thus the examiners must determine which (negative) consequences the missing summary are to have on the marking based on the provisions in the programme regulations; cf. section 24(2), third sentence in the Examinations Order."

- *Declaration of authorship:* A [declaration of authorship](#), by which the students are to declare that the assignment does not exceed the specified maximum number of pages and that they have written the assignment themselves, and that all citations are clearly marked as such. The individual programmes may decide if they require that students use the declaration. The examiners can check with the Administration of the programme in question. The Administration sends all assignments that have been submitted within the deadline out for assessment - with or without a declaration of Authorship - and the examiners may *not* sanction if the declaration is missing (neither by rejecting to assess the assignment nor by lowering the mark).
- *Individualisation:* Group assignments, which pursuant to the prescribed examination regulations must be individualised, but are not (to the sufficient extent), are to be rejected if the examiners assess that the contribution of the individual student cannot be established thus hindering an individual assessment. In such case, the examiners are to make an application to the Administration, who will handle the case in relation to the students.
- *Language:* Assignments written and submitted in another language than the one specified in prescribed examination regulations must be rejected<sup>3</sup>. In such case, the examiners are to make an application to the Administration, who will handle the case in relation to the student/s. If the student/s has/have been granted exemption by the study board to write the assignment in another language than the one prescribed, the study board will ensure in advance that the examiners understand and accept that they are to assess the assignment as is.

### **Blank assignments**

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<sup>3</sup> In cases where the examination regulations state that the examination is to be conducted in Danish, the assignment may be written in Swedish or Norwegian without any special exemption unless it is explicitly stated that part of the purpose of the examination is to show proficiency in Danish.

Blank assignments that are handed in are marked "-3 (blank)". The Administration makes a note of this on the mark sheet and the assignment is not sent out for assessment, as there is, inherently, no basis for an assessment.

In case of doubt or query, you are kindly urged to contact the relevant programme secretariat.

*Rie Snekkerup*

Director of Programme Administration Services

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**Appendix: Determination of number of pages**

In parallel with the declaration of authorship, **a new joint system for the determination and count of number of pages in assignments** is being introduced, consisting of a specification of page maximum and requirements for the amount of text on each page (number of characters, margins and font).

The page format is based on a page norm of 2,275 characters (including spaces). Each individual page of the assignment may not comprise more than 2,275 characters on average.

All pages must be set with top and bottom margins of at least 3 cm and left and right margins of at least 2 cm. The minimum font size shall be 11 pitch. Tables, diagrams, illustrations etc. are not to be included in the number of characters, but insertion of such elements does not justify an exceeding of the specified maximum number of pages.

The total number of pages does not include the front page, the declaration of authorship, the bibliography or appendices (if any). Appendices are not to be included in the assessment.

Thus the number of pages and compliance with the specified page format are the primary determinants for whether an assignment complies with the specified maximum. Normally the page format will ensure that the individual pages do not comprise more than 2,275 characters on average.

Accordingly, any other rules on the maximum number of pages in assignments (stipulated by programme regulations, manuals or the like) shall no longer apply. It should also be noted that provisions on character count for tables, figures and other forms of illustrations are no longer relevant. Pursuant to the new requirements for page numbers and formats, all forms of illustrations are counted according to the extent of the text space they occupy.