Writing a Report
Session overview

• What is a report?

• What are the differences between essays and reports?

• How do I structure a report?
  – What sections are included?
  – How do I number each section?
  – How do I format a report?

• What kind of language should I use in a report?
What is a report?

The purpose:
• Reports are usually commissioned or requested by a person or an organisation in order to get information about something
• The report is, therefore, a written presentation in response to that specific request and its purpose

The aim:
• To give a straightforward, clearly-structured account of something, to answer a question and often, to offer solutions to a problem
Comparing reports and essays

Reports

Reports present *facts/information*, the aim being to explain them as clearly as possible.

Reports are written for the *person* or *organisation* that requested them.

Reports will be *scanned*, which means the most important information needs to be easily accessible, and summarised where appropriate.

Reports end with a conclusion *and recommendations* for addressing issues raised in the report.

Essays

Essays argue or discuss an issue, incorporating the author’s own stance.

Essays are written for a lecturer.

Essays will be read carefully.

Essays end with a conclusion.
Structuring a report

Most reports will contain the following sections (in this order):

- Letter of transmittal
- Title page
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- Recommendations
- Bibliography
- Appendices
Structuring a report

Letter of transmittal

A letter to the person who commissioned the report “announcing” the completion and delivery of the report

• Include
  – Salutation (e.g. Dear Ms Watson)
  – The purpose of the letter (e.g. here is the marketing report you commissioned)
  – The main findings of the report
  – Mention any important considerations
  – Acknowledge any particular help
  – Thanks
Structuring a report

Title page

The ‘cover’ of the report, which presents the key details in a professional layout

Include:

• The name of the report (i.e. the topic of the report)
• The organisation that commissioned it
• Your name (and student number)
• The date
Structuring a report

Table of contents

Important for allowing readers to quickly access the information they need

- Show each of the numbered points and sub-points
- Include page numbers for each
- Include a list of figures if necessary
- Include a list of appendices
- Ensure your layout is clear and professional
Structuring a report

Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
   2.1 Theories of reward
   2.2 Reward in Practice
      2.2.1 Example – Company 1
      2.2.2 Example – Company 2
3. A review of rewards at UC
   3.1 Rewards written into policy
   3.2 Other commonly used rewards
4. UC staff response to rewards
Structuring a report

**Summary / executive summary / abstract**

Some readers will not wish to read the entire report, so the summary / abstract presents the entire report in brief (roughly one page)

Include:
- who requested the report
- purpose
- background context
- brief methodology
- main findings, and
- Recommendations

- Use paragraphs for an abstract and paragraphs / dot points for an executive summary

- Make sure the layout is methodical, working through each section of the report clearly
Structuring a report

Introduction

• State who commissioned the report

• Briefly explain the context / problem that triggered the report, giving any necessary background information

• Clearly state the purpose of the report and its scope (i.e. what it does and does not cover)

• Mention the types of sources used (i.e. texts, surveys, observation, interviews)
Structuring a report

Body of report

- Literature review (if applicable)
- Research methodology
  - Explain what you did and why, mentioning any possible problems
- Your findings
  - State the facts clearly
  - Include graphs and charts where appropriate and label them
- Discussion
  - Discuss and interpret the findings
  - Can be organised into discrete, relevant sections
Structuring a report

Conclusion

• Sum up your main findings and key points of discussion

• Make sure that you do not bring in any new information

• Be brief and to the point – you should already have reported on everything in sufficient detail
Structuring a report

Recommendations

After ‘reporting’ on the present state of your particular topic, you need to make recommendations about what should now occur in response to your findings

• These recommendations should evolve from your findings, discussion and conclusions

• Use dot points so each recommendation can be read easily

• This section can be a section that stands alone, OR

• This section can be sequenced after each finding and discussion

This report makes the following recommendations:
– That…
– That…
– That…
Structuring a report

**Reference List**

- Begin on a new page
- Use the style required in your unit
Appendices

Appendices are the place to include any data too bulky to place in the body of your report.

You might include:

- Your survey tool (but not all your responses)
- Any graphs or tables too large for the body

Number each appendix clearly (i.e. Appendix A)
Structuring a report

**Formatting**

- Make sure your numbering system is clear and accurate
- Use a header and/or footer with the name of the report and page numbers
- Be professional not pretty
  - Ensure your wording and formatting are consistent and meticulous
- Use a clear and formal typeface: Times New Roman or Helvetica are best
- Tables and graphs must have a title and be clearly labelled
- Use plenty of white space
Language in a report

Language should be formal language, but simple and clear

• By and large, sentences should be short, relieved when appropriate by some complex sentences

• Use sub-headings and dot points when appropriate, but also include paragraphs with topic sentences

• Read other reports to get a feel for the language
Workshops: For details and registration,
http://www.canberra.edu.au/library/research-gateway/research-skills-training

Individual consultations: 30 minute consultations, Monday to Friday

Drop-in Sessions: 15 minute consultations
11:30 am-12:30 pm, 2:30 pm-3:30 pm: Library Building 8, Level B:
1C34: 1:00 pm-2:00 pm Teaching and Learning Commons

Faculty of Health Drop in
Thursday 1:00-2:00 pm: Student Resource Centre, Building 6B

Online Tutoring Service: Smarthinking
Access Smarthinking from LearnOnline (Moodle) site

Online resources
For more information visit,