Report Writing

Academic Learning Support
PowerPoint Outline

• Explanation of a report
• Comparing a report to an essay
• Structure
• Planning
• Referencing
• Appendices
• General Tips
What is a Report?

• A document that follows a defined structure to present information about an issue

• It is organised into units using headings and sub-headings that allow specific sections to be easily located

• Reports can take various forms
How is a report different to an essay?

A Report
- Originated in the workplace
- Has separate sections that can be read individually and in a different order
- Has titled and numbered sections and subsections
- May contain tables, charts, figures and appendices
- May contain recommendations

An Essay
- Originated in academia
- Is continuous writing that includes an introduction, body and conclusion
- Uses paragraphs with introductory topic sentences, explanations and evidence
- Does not contain tables, charts, figures and appendices
- Does not include recommendations
A Comparison of a Report and Essay

• Example of a Report

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Background
In 2007 Jillaroo Associates of Australia (JAA) failed in its attempt to acquire 90% of the Qantas group (Time Magazine 2007). After the failed bid, Qantas reviewed its fiscal approach to create a ‘poison pill’ to deter any future buy out attempts (Knibb 2007). Given this, JAA is considering creating its own airline, Jillaroo Air, to compete with Qantas within Australia and internationally.

1.2 Aims
This report examines international and Australian aviation conditions and markets to consider the feasibility of a new Australian airline successfully competing within Australia and in the international market.

1.3 Scope
This report only examines international airline revenues and competition. It does not

• Example of an Essay Introduction

With an ever-expanding tourism industry in Australia, existing airlines are experiencing heavier demand for their services. This essay explores the feasibility of a new Australian airline successfully competing within Australia and in the international market. Geographical distances within one of the world’s largest continents also provide opportunities for airline services. A relatively small population within Australia may negatively affect the demand for airline operations. The viability of the international tourism industry is continuously influenced by variations in world currencies. Recent attempts by larger airlines to acquire smaller ones have been unsuccessful due to restrictions on monopolistic business practices. This essay focuses on forecasting the future position of the Australian aviation industry and its importance in the global economy. It will evaluate the potential positive and negative effects of a new airline being developed in Australia in terms of economic and environmental impacts. Within this context, it is clear that there is a strong case for the establishment of a new airline in Australia.
Reports vary in their purpose. They may attempt to:

- Inform
- Analyse
- Persuade
Writing Your Report: General Strategies

• All sections indicated here may not be required
• Structure and style depends on purpose and audience.
• Course profiles will provide detailed information on specific structure
• Tutors, Lecturers, Academic Learning Support Staff can assist – ask them questions.
Basic Structure

• Cover Page – access online
• Title Page
• Executive Summary
• Table of Contents – Automatically generated using MS Word (DO THIS LAST)
• Introduction
• Discussion
• Conclusion
• Recommendations
• Reference list
• Appendices
Other Possible Requirements

• Acknowledgements
• Letter of Transmittal
• List of Tables and Figures
• Literature Review
• Glossary

Check Unit Outlines – ask lecturers and tutors
Analyse Your Topic

To carefully analyse your topic, ask the following questions:

• Who is the report intended for?
• What do they need to know?
• What is the purpose of your report? Why are you writing it? (aim)
• What areas/ideas does your report focus on? (scope)

Highlight key words to help you identify what to focus on
Make A Plan

• Brainstorm your ideas

• What do you already know about this topic?

• What do you need to find out?

• Select ideas relevant to aims of Report

• Begin grouping related ideas under headings and sub-headings
Brainstorm Activity

• Subject:
  ‘What is the best way to get to university from your home?’

After brainstorming: what are the headings for the report?
Can headings be different but the information the same?
For Academic essays and reports: Locate Information and Take Notes

• Investigate topic using a variety of sources – books, journal articles, websites, annual reports
• Note down important information
• Create a bank of relevant quotations
• Record sources with full reference details
Prepare the First Draft

• The Main Section is usually the best place to start
• Follow with Conclusion then Recommendations
• Then complete Introduction
• Write the Executive Summary last (summary of entire report)
• Language – see Grammar for Reports attachment
The Executive Summary

Who is the Summary for? (audience)
The person who asked for the report
In the workplace this could be your
• Employer
• Client

What is it for? (purpose)
It explains the purpose of the report attempting to interest and encourage audience to read further and implement recommendations
Executive Summary

• Provide a summary of your whole Report (the executive summary is NOT just an introduction)
  1. Introduce topic
  2. List main points
  3. Summarise Discussion
  4. State Conclusion/s
  5. State Recommendation/s

• Be concise
Introduction

Purpose: To orientate reader to whole document and give context

• Background
• Aims
• Scope
• Begin page numbers
Discussion – Main Body

• Divided into sections and sub-sections to indicate various stages

• Present and comment on evidence and use evidence to support opinion. Every section should contain:
  • theory
  • reference to the case study
  • The student’s own analysis and delivery of their argument
Conclusion then Recommendations

• The Conclusion summarises the discussion and presents a logical outcome

• No new information should be introduced in the conclusion

• Conclude by responding to key questions from the Introduction

• Recommendations state actions to take

• They should be logical, persuasive, practical and specific. Avoid vague, general ideas

• Sometimes the Conclusion and Recommendations can be combined
Referencing

• Use the Harvard System of Referencing

• Include in-text references

• Include a Reference List at the end of your report on a separate page
Appendices

• Include supplementary material that has been referred to in your Report
e.g. large tables, transcripts, diagrams, other supporting material...

• Provide labels and references for appendices
General Tips

- Editing and proofreading
- Course profile requirements / Moodle
- Formatting requirements (see guides)
- Word limit
- Adequate research/references
- Language – clear, concise, formal (avoid first person)
Exercise: Report Writing

• Sampong Electronics – a new MP3 player, the I-Sam
• Your marketing firm (MarkIT) is hired to:
  - suggest possible colour choices for the I-Sam
  - do a market survey of customer responses to the proposed colouring of I-Sam

What are some possible sections for the report?
Exercise: Report Writing

- Research – Singh (2006) shows that:
  - colour is a critical factor in consumer choice
  - Most people make a decision whether to buy or not within 90 seconds (62-90% make this decision based on colour)
  - colours can affect people’s moods
  - colours associated with brands
  - men/women – different preferences
Exercise: Report Writing

• Decide on 3 colour choices – black, white, silver.
• Conduct a survey of 1,000 people (500 males, 500 females) to discover which colour is preferred.
Results of survey - females

Figure 1: Female responses to the proposed colouring of the I-Sam
Results of survey - males

- Black: 60%
- Silver: 30%
- White: 10%
Exercise: Report Writing

• Introduction – what is the purpose of your report?
  - market survey findings
  - suggest colour choices
# Discussion – main points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points/Issues</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consumer</td>
<td>a) Most people decide to buy within 90 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaviour</td>
<td>b) 62-90% base decisions on colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Colour/mood</td>
<td>Colours can affect people’s mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Branding</td>
<td>Colours associated with certain brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender</td>
<td>Men/women have different colour preferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations

1. Colour and mood - colour can affect people’s mood. Therefore, if Sampong wants its product to be associated with happy and positive emotions Sampong should choose Silver.

2. Branding - colours are often associated with brands. I-Sam should be marketed in a way that colour becomes part of its brand. The main competitor, the I-Pod is associated with white, thus to differentiate itself from competitor Sampong should use Silver.

3. Gender - Based on the survey, men and women had different preferences of colour. Therefore, if the product is to be marketed to both men and women, we recommend the use of silver as both genders showed some preference for this colour.
Final Task: Case study analysis

• You are the HR manager assigned to hiring and training 10 new managers for branches of existing banks.

• The new employees will be mentored and trained by existing managers of branches who intend to retire after the 1 year ‘hand-over’.

• You establish the program but find that after two months the new employees are not learning anymore and that the managers feel over worked.

• What are some of the possible issues involved and how could they be addressed? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented mentoring program? Think from all sides and explore all possibilities!

• (Adapted from Canadian University Tournament Excalibur Case studies http://www.portailrh.org/excalibur/en/case/Cas_Vend_am_A.pdf viewed )
Task Questions

• Keeping in mind that each section needs:
  • ?
  • Case study
  • Theory
  • Analysis

• What are some possible sections and what kind of theory could support them?
Further Advice and Resources

Please visit the
Academic Learning Support
EBA House, 545 Kent St
Level 5
Ph: 9283 8816

Email: ross.lehman@kent.edu.au