Preparing a Final Report

This document offers some guidance regarding the compilation of the Final Report for your project. Topics covered include:

1. Mandatory Inclusions

The following must be included in all final Project Reports:

- **Assessment Item Cover Sheet** (http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/student-forms/#exams) A completed assessment item coversheet must be included with your final report submission. The cover sheet need not be physically part of the report and can be submitted as a separate sheet.

- **Title Page** The title page margins are:

  30 mm from left hand edge
  30 mm from right hand edge
  60 mm from top edge
  30 mm from bottom edge

  Title page should also contain the wording:

  A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical (Computer or Telecommunications) Engineering at The University of Newcastle, Australia.

- **Abstract**, containing a concise description of the intentions, scope and outcomes of the work described (approx 1/3 to 2/3 of a page).

- A concise list of your **Key Contributions** to the project (i.e. what have you done in the context of the overall project), signed by the student and countersigned by the supervisor.

  Note that these contributions need not be original in the global context, but represent significant work that you have undertaken. For example, a key contribution might

have been to design, build and launch a geostationary satellite. This is not strictly original but is still a substantial contribution!

- **Table of Contents**, giving page numbers for chapters, sections, sub-sections and appendices (if applicable).

- **List of References** set out as per IEEE Transactions format or a variation of the Harvard format. Whatever you choose - be consistent. Look up on the web or in the library for details.

2. Suggested Structure

There are as many acceptable formats for reports as there are projects. Software projects, hardware projects, theoretical and practical projects all require different emphases. However, there are some common expectations for reports which are not always met by first time authors.

The "Report Format" document sets out a format that is generally applicable to a wide range of projects. Students are encouraged to review this before setting out their own report. However, before finalising your report, it is recommended that you discuss your intended format with your supervisor.

3. Page Length Constraint

Final Year Project Reports have an expected page length of 50 - 80 pages. This constraint is the direct result of the Discipline attempting to reign in the perceived "inflation" in report sizes observed over recent years, to the point where some reports are larger (and indeed better) than some postgraduate theses. This in turn is creating unreasonable expectations amongst and upon students.

The 50 - 80 page limit imposed is a "soft" limit, in the sense that students will not be penalised simply for exceeding it. However, the examiners will pay particular attention to the content of reports exceeding the 80 page limit. That is, if a 100 page report actually only contains 20 pages of substantial work, then yes, the student will be penalised.

The limit is also based on the kind of project that you are doing. It is expected if you have a major literature review aspect to your project that your report will be longer to those who may have a major hardware design completed as part of the project. The constraint, in effect, imposes on students the need to carefully consider the content of the report. Concise report writing is itself a virtue, which should be duly recognised and rewarded.

In determining the page length, the front pieces (abstract, contents etc) are not included, nor are any appendices that may be used to supplement the main body of the report. Diagrams included in the main body of the report would normally be included.

4. Technical Details

Normally "Page 1" corresponds to the first page of Chapter One, and continues through to the last page of the List of References. The front piece pages (Abstract, Table of Contents, etc)

are normally numbered using lower case roman numerals, starting with the Abstract. The title page is not numbered.

Appendices are often numbered alphabetically (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc). The pages in these appendices are numbered A-1, A-2, ...

All page numbers should be in the bottom right hand corner. Page margins should be:

left side : 30 - 35 mm
right side : 25 - 30 mm
top : 30 - 35 mm
bottom : 30 - 35 mm

Headers and footers are optional, but if used should be justified to the outer side and of an appropriate size (i.e. smaller font than body of text).

The **body of text** should be either justified (left and right) or left justified only. Line spacings should be 1.25 to 1.5 for general text. Where mathematical symbols or equations are included in text, ensure that they do not encroach significantly onto adjacent lines.

Fonts should preferably be serif (classic style) as opposed to san serif (modern style). Arial, Times Roman or Calibri are recommended. Font size should be 11 point, with smaller sizes used on diagrams as appropriate.

Chapter titles, section headings and sub-section headings should be suitably enhanced through increased font size and/or bolding. Do not use underlining (it is used in handwritten work to indicate bold or italics).

Figures should be placed at the bottom of the page on which it is first referenced, or if not sufficient space, then at the top of the following page. Avoid putting figures between text on any given page. Also avoid having less than five lines of text on a page - if the figure is that large, give it a full page. Don't squash figures in. Make sure there's plenty of space for the diagram, and for its caption. The Figure caption should include a Figure number (usually associated with its chapter, e.g. Figure 2.5 - the fifth figure in Chapter 2).

It is not necessary to number every equation. Equations should only be numbered if you intend to refer to it in subsequent work. In such cases, a number reflecting the chapter (such as equation 3.14) or chapter and section (3.2.7) is appropriate.

Report to be printed single sided on A4 bond or equivalent print quality paper, suitable for photocopying (avoid coloured diagrams, literally pasting photographs or diagrams, and fold-out pages).

5. Spelling and Grammar

Incorrect spellings and grammatical errors should be totally eliminated from your report. It is amazing how these little things can detract from an otherwise worthy presentation. Ask a colleague/friend/husband/wife/significant other/mother to read the report. Even though they probably will not understand all of the technical content, they will invariably pick up grammatical and spelling mistakes!

6. Scope of Report

A frequently asked question is along the lines of "How do I write about work I intend to do between Report submission and Open Day?"

The simple answer is "honestly". Your report should describe work that has been completed by Report submission date, and should make reference to any work expected or hoped to be completed by Open Day (and referred to as such). Then, on Open Day, you can demonstrate the work if it is done. If it is not done, then you have not made any false claims.

It is undesirable to show work on Open Day that isn't referred to in the report (this indicates that you weren't very well organised). It is fatal to claim in your Report that certain work has been completed on the assumption that even though it isn't done yet, you will have it finished by Open Day. Such a claim can jeopardise your whole report.

7. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else's work without appropriate referencing thereby purporting the work to be your own. It is highly unlikely (indeed inappropriate) that your report will contain only your original work. (For example, you will need to draw on the work of others to enable you to put your work into an appropriate context. You might also need some key results from control theory, physics and so on as a platform for your work. This material should be suitably referenced.)

The University has a policy on this matter (http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policy/000608.html)

8. Preparation and Format for Submission

Students must submit an electronic version of their final report via Turnitin in Blackboard.

The electronic version is to be prepared in Portable Document Format (.pdf) format.

Supplementary files such as source, compiled and linked code, experimental data files, diagrams, circuit simulation files, and so on can be submitted via email to course coordinator or make available to be downloaded from the Cloud.

9. Deadline

Meeting the deadline for submission of final year project reports is very important. The time for submission of final year project report will be set at 5:00 pm on a date to be specified by

the Discipline. Failure to submit the report at or before the due time is regarded in the same way as failure to attend a formal written examination. The result will be failure, subject to any other decision which may be taken as a result of an adverse circumstance.

This can be interpreted as no extensions.

The report is to be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard, and will be time stamped automatically.

10. Time Taken to Write a Report

Don't under estimate the time involved to produce a project report. Three weeks full time is considered a minimum by those who've been involved with projects before. (Yes! That long!) Much of this time is taken up with seemingly trivial tasks such as editing (for grammar and spelling), formatting, creating diagrams and so. The writing of the text is only about half the work involved.

11. Feedback on Draft Reports

Your supervisor will generally be happy to assist you in producing the report (assuming you have been interacting with your supervisor all year). In particular, she or he should be able to read a draft, and offer feedback to you on content, style, length, and so on.

Given that each supervisor has a number of project students, and will also be expected to read their reports too, it is probably not fair to expect your supervisor to read multiple drafts of your complete report. However, it is reasonable to expect your supervisor to review one full draft, and to review additional small parts as necessary.

12. Disclaimer

The material presented above is intended to be a guide only in matters of style and preference. If students have any doubts or seek clarification, they are encouraged to discuss their report with their supervisor.