

AC40001 Individual Project Mid-term Report

This document provides a summary of the requirements for the mid-term project report along with guidance for what you need to submit.

What is the purpose of the mid-term report?

The mid-term report is intended to be brief, value-added element to your project. It is not intended to be a major distraction in terms of your effort. It is an opportunity to deliver a written report of your progress that will benefit you and others. The mid-term report achieves the following:

1. *It is a checkpoint.* Because the project spans both Semester 1 AND Semester 2, it is important for you to reflect on how things are going so far, and to offer reassurances that you are making progress with your project!
2. *It allows you to express in words what you are doing.* The mid-term report requires you to start putting into words what you are doing, in a way that you and others can understand. This will be helpful for you later, when you bring together the 'story' of your project in your final report.
3. *It allows you, and your project advisor to check if you are both on the same page.* Do you and your advisor have the same understanding of what the aims and objectives of the project are?!
4. *It provides the second marker of your project with an initial insight into what your project is about* - a starting point for when they will be reviewing your completed project in more detail, later.
5. *It serves as a catalyst for discussion.* It can be used by you and your project advisor as a stimulus for discussion, to help you both to align expectations in terms of what has been done so far and what remains to be done.
6. *You get credit for it!* The mid-term report is worth up to 5% of your final project grade.

What should the mid-term report contain?

A best-case scenario is that your mid-term report is a bringing together of information that you already have, in a concise and structured way. However, there will be some areas that you need to work on too. A general indicator of the content for your mid-term report is provided below. Whilst all projects share the same Academic foundations, it is recognised that individual projects can vary in terms of their needs and requirements. For example, some projects are very research oriented, whilst others are more applied in nature. Some projects have fixed requirements, whilst others are more exploratory in nature. Some projects rely heavily on user involvement, user interface design and prototyping, whilst others do not. The content guidance below for the mid-term report should be adapted for the needs of individual projects, where required; it may not necessarily be 'one size fits all'. Your project advisor may have specific areas of their own that they wish you to emphasize or focus upon too. At the end of the day, the report should be of benefit to you and your project.

Table 1 below outlines the main areas of content suggested for your report (subject to project-specific guidance or requirements that you agree with your project advisor). Within each section below, I have presented questions for stimulation. Note: it is not intended that you use these questions as section headings in your report. The report length and section-length may vary depending on the requirements of individual projects and any requirements which have been agreed with your project advisor. However, I have offered an indicative length within each section below. Please note that this is meant as a strong advisory guide rather than a strict limitation. We want your report to be concise (and that is part of the challenge), but not at the expense of leaving out valuable content. The indicative lengths below are based on text-only content in a standard font size (e.g., Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri, in 11pt size) and do not consider where you may have diagrams, figures, or tables in your report, or where you may have attached Appendices either, e.g., a project plan or similar.

Table 1 Suggested content of report

Provide a clear summary of the aims and objectives of your project
What is the problem you are addressing? Why is it a problem? Why should others care about you solving it? What do you intend to do about it, as the aims and objectives of your project? <i>Indicative length: One or two paragraphs of text should be sufficient here.</i>
Provide a clear summary of any background research that you have done
Have you taken an opportunity to consider the wider background context to your project and the research area or 'market' that it exists within? Have you taken an opportunity to find out if anyone else has already attempted to solve the same problem that your project addresses (or a similar problem)? Are there existing solutions, research outcomes, and/or products? Have you learned anything from these – useful or not? In general, what are the main things that you have found out, and how are you incorporating this information into your project? How is it influencing the approach that you will be taking with your project, or not as the case may be? <i>Indicative length: A couple of paragraphs to a half-page of A4 could be sufficient here, depending on how literature-dominant your project is. If you wish, you can include any significant references you have identified as an Appendix to your report.</i>
What are the main features of your product / application / 'solution'?
Please provide a summary. <i>Indicative length: a summary is all that is required here. It could be a single paragraph. It could be a brief list of bulleted items / features. If you wish, you can include any formal specifications that you have already prepared during your project as an Appendix to your report, e.g., user stories or similar.</i>
Provide a clear summary of progress to date
What are the main things that you have achieved in your project so far? This may include research that you have done, major design and technology options you have explored, requirements gathering tasks, prototyping, testing, user-driven tasks, and so on. What are the main discoveries or stumbling blocks so far? Projects can vary of course in terms of the factors that are relevant to them. Convey what is relevant to your own project. <i>Indicative length: A couple of paragraphs to a half-page of A4 should be sufficient for this. You can include additional Appendices to your report if you wish, e.g., to show examples of things you have been working on such as storyboards, prototypes, etc. The nature of these will be project-dependent of course.</i>
Personal reflection
Please take an opportunity to reflect on how you feel things are going with your project so far. Are you where you want to be? Are you on-track for what you want to achieve (in terms of an outcome and/or a grade)? What have been the main challenges or learning curves for you so far? What achievements are you most happy with so far? <i>Indicative length: A single paragraph should suffice for this, or two. We just want to gauge how things are going for you so far and to see that you have a good grasp on your project and progress.</i>
Provide a clear summary of your plans for the remainder of the project
What will you be doing for the remaining months of your project? Please provide a summary outline of the following, where applicable: technical milestones, evaluation milestones, testing milestones, documentation milestones. Please include a visual plan, e.g., a Gantt chart or similar, which focuses on the remaining stages of your project only. Finally, please also consider any major areas of risk that are remaining for your project and briefly describe any plans that you have for mitigating them. <i>Indicative length: A paragraph or two which describes your plan, alongside a visual presentation (e.g., Gantt chart or similar). A paragraph or two that discusses any major risks foreseen for the remainder of the project and your considerations for mitigating them.</i>

What layout and format should the report be?

There is no preferred layout, you can present it as you wish (paying attention to general aspects of structure and presentation of course!). You can structure the report around the general headings above if you wish. Please use a standard font, font-size, and line-spacing for the main body of text, e.g., such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri, in 11/12pt, and single line-spacing. Please ensure that Figures, Diagrams, or Tables have captions and are cross-referenced where applicable. Table captions can be placed *above* the table content, whereas captions for Figures or Diagrams can be placed below. In terms of format, you should submit your report as a PDF. Please note that some project advisors may have their own preferences for the structure or layout, e.g., for reports to be in a 2-column layout or similar. Please liaise with your project advisor to clarify.

Who is the target audience of the report?

There are three main targets here: your project advisor, your second marker, and yourself! For your own benefit and writing practice, you are conveying what you have done so far in words. This also benefits your project advisor who can check how their view of the project aligns with your own. Finally, the second marker wishes to become enlightened with what you have been doing so far! The second marker is not yet familiar with your project and it is worth bearing that in mind during the writing of your report, e.g., are you able to express effectively what you are doing to someone who is unfamiliar with the project?

What happens to the report after it has been written?

The main benefit of the report is as a formative exercise for you, and as a reflective checkpoint during your project. Some project advisors may wish to utilise the report during a subsequent meeting with you, e.g., perhaps as a useful stimulus for discussion and clarification.

How is the mid-term report graded?

Your report will be assessed by your project advisor and/or second marker. In some cases, your project advisor may wish to involve you in the process too, e.g., as part of a reflective form of self-assessment. The following, general marking criteria will be suggested to marker(s), but some projects or advisors may have particular emphasis of their own too. The purpose of the criteria is to highlight areas of consideration for strengths and weaknesses. These can be used to formulate a grade for the report based upon the extent to which the criteria have been met, e.g., excellent / very good / and so on.

Criteria for markers
The project aims and objectives are clearly articulated.
The student has taken an opportunity to consider the wider context of the project and its background, and they have synthesized the results of this into their approach.
The student has outlined the main, intended features of their product / solution.
The progress to-date is presented and appears to be relevant to, and in-keeping with the needs of the project, as well as giving confidence in the (amount of) work that has been done.
The student has taken an opportunity to reflect on how the project is going so far, including any major challenges and achievements so far.
A clear and (as far as can be ascertained) feasible plan for the remainder of the project is presented and with consideration of any major risks and mitigations.

Consideration will also be made to the general structure, presentation, and clarity of your report.