

guidelines

for report writing

Design & Medier



ERHVERVS
AKADEMI
SYDVEST

Why this guide

The objective of this document is to explain the academy's expectations to a report. A proper and consistent report is important, because both the structure and the content is taken into consideration when your work is evaluated.

The report you produce is the principal way of communicating your work. Good structure, layout and writing reflects the process and how you work. The report is the first impression, and you want it to be professional and of high quality - both for the sake of readability and credibility.

The following guidelines are standard requirements that must be met. Some projects may require you to meet and/or use specific requirements. However, this will be clearly stated in the presentation of those projects.

Report style and audience

The report should be a structured presentation of your project, making it easy for the reader to follow the process and the intention. Therefore, the chapters and sub-sections should follow a logical and progressive path.

The reader has never seen your project, so therefore be sure to document and argument properly. Take the reader by the hand and lead them gently through the report, convincing them that you have put great deal of effort and consideration into your project.

You must assume that the reader has the same technical and theoretical background and level as you, but not specific knowledge about your chosen subject area. Therefore, your project should explain how you apply the theoretical framework to the project, not what the theory is. Be sure to use the technical terms that you have learned during the course of your education.

Documentation

You must document your work carefully during the process, as it will help you to structure your report. This can be particularly helpful if you finish early in the project period or if you are several group members keeping track of each other's work.

This guide on provides guidelines for you to follow, to ensure that your written material is structured and meets the expectations of the curriculum.

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Content of your report

A report should contain the following sections:

- Title page
- A front page
- Preface
- Table of content
- Introduction
- Problem description
- Problem definition (DA:problemformulering)
- Delimitations
- Main section
- Conclusion / perspectives
- References
- Appendix

Title page

The title page must contain:

- Title of the project
- Authors with signature⁶
- Supervisors names
- Education and semester
- Project period
- Number of pages
- A list of products submitted
- Request for confidentiality

Remember to write the URL of your webpages, URL and login to the backend. For this part of the report, you must use the template provided by the institution.

Front Page

- Use your own discretion and design

Preface (optional)

The preface contains information about the report itself. It should state the writer's intention, acknowledgements, and other special circumstances.

Abstract (required at BA level)

The goal of the abstract is to briefly outline the contents of the paper, written in a way that makes both the research and the conclusions understandable to someone not familiar with the topic. It should short, concise and no more than half an A4 page.

The abstract should include the following:

- Topic and problem
- Research question
- Purpose
- Important theories used
- Method
- Content
- Results
- Conclusions/Recommendations
- Important points

The abstract must also include any information necessary for external referencing, including at least Title, author, publishing institution and year.

Table of content

The table of content gives an overview of the content with page numbers.

It is possible to use automated formatting, indexing and referencing facilities in most programs - this will ensure that the table of content is consistent and updated. Otherwise, be sure it is the last thing you write.

After the table of content, the actual report begins.

Introduction

The introduction should guide the reader into the project and the formulation of the problem. It should also give sufficient information to explain the motivation for and background of the project.

Note: At AP level the introduction and the problem description may be combined to prevent repetition. At BA level, the two sections must be kept separate in order to facilitate a higher academic level.

Problem description

This chapter provides the background for the problem. It should begin with a description of the task at hand as well as an introduction to the main issues.

Consider the following relevant questions when you make the problem analysis:

- What are the problems?
- Why are they problems?
- To whom are they problems?
- How are they related to the company, business environment, to society, to individuals, etc.?
- What is the impact of the problems?
- Does someone else have an opinion on this problem, or a similar problem?
- How does other try to solve similar problems and situations?
- What has been done to solve the problems?

Problem definition

The starting point of a problem definition is the information gathered in the problem analysis stage. The different aspects surrounding the problem that have been analysed should be taken into account in the problem definition.

A structured description of the problem, with the goal of creating an explicit statement about the problem and possibly the direction of idea generation. A clearly expressed problem definition provides for a shared understanding of the problem and its relevant aspects.

A problem definition can be designed in more ways, for example:

- One or few questions accompanied by an explanatory text
- A text that outlines one or more questions
- Stating assumptions on how to solve the problem, which the following report confirms or rejects

The question in the problem definition could be something that:

- Makes you wonder and want to investigate further
- Seems filled with contrasts
- There is no immediate answer to

The problem analysis, problem definition and the delimitations sets the stage for the entire report and guides the project - make sure they are well considered and coherent. While working with these subjects it might be necessary to adjust them - you can never foresee what you may discover during the project.

Note: At the BA level this section must be expanded upon and replaced by the *Research question*. The research question results in a more detailed research based on the identified questions, as well as a significant reflection on the results and chosen methodology.

Scope and delimitations

You will most likely not be able to deal with all the problems found during the problem analysis. The scope and delimitations states your focus area and a description of why this specific area is relevant. Use this section to explain why you have chosen to go into detail on a specific part of the greater picture and why it is relevant to do so.

Sample phrases that help express the scope of the study:

- The coverage of this study...
- The study consists of...

Sample phrases that expressed the delimitations of the study:

- The study does not cover the...
- The researcher limited this research to...

Methodology - only for PBA level

In this section, you should start by clarifying your approach to the collection and analysis of data. The research philosophy you adopt affects the strategy for choosing methods, models, and theories to solve the issues presented in the problem definition, as well as how they are expected to help doing this.

The methodology section of a report provides the information by which a study's validity is judged. Therefore, it requires a clear and precise description of how the research conducted in a particular field. It should also clarify the rationale behind any specific philosophical choices that are applied.

The methodology section should describe what has done to answer the research question. It should describe how it was done, as well as justifying the research design, and how the results were analysed. Scientific writing is direct and orderly. Therefore, the methodology section structure should:

- Describe the research paradigms
- Explain the research philosophies e.g. 'this case is treated with a positivistic approach...'

'In order to...'

- Describe the strategies used in the study
- Explain what was done to collect and analyse the data
- Explain why certain methods were adopted e.g. qualitative and/or quantitative methods for analysing data

Once all elements of the methodology section have been written, focus on how to present those elements as clearly and logically as possible.

The description of data, method choices, approach, and strategies should be chronologically organised. If you encounter problems while collecting or generating your data do not ignore them or pretend they did not occur. Often, recording how you overcame obstacles can form an interesting part of the methodology. This means that you also can give a rationale for certain decisions, plus a realistic view of using the methods you chose.

Main Section

The main section is where you explain your work and the process of research, analysis and decisions during the project. It is important that you keep a clear line of reasoning and a logical structure.

You may find it useful to divide each sub-section into an introduction, a subject and a summary. In turn these should lead to the next sub-section. It is the process during the project that decides how best to structure the main section, but make sure that it is possible for the reader to keep track of the process and the reasoning.

Consider the relevance of these topics when writing the main section:

- Theories and methods: Which have been used, how should they be presented and how important are they? Remember that you should not be explaining the details of the theories in the report, only how and why you apply them.
- Empirical data: How did you come by the data and how should it be presented?
- Research: What research has been made and how should it be presented?
- Analysis: What is analysed, why, and how?
- Technical issues: What are they, should they be presented and how?

Always make sure that the content of your report is relevant and contributes to the transparency and the understanding for the reader.

Conclusion / Perspectives

The conclusion is your last comments about the project and the process. A conclusion should be short and summarize the most important results. When you compare your conclusion to the problem definition, it should answer the question raised in the beginning of the project and should not raise new questions.

If relevant, you can add a perspective. Here you can give your opinion on possible future developments regarding the project - this is done in a separate section after the conclusion. Perspectives should always be based on the conclusion and should not be used to convey an excuse for not going into further detail in the report.

In all major reports, you will be required to put the conclusion into perspective.

Reference list

Here, all references, works, URLs, etc. used for the complete the paper must be listed.

Dependant on the par and the education you are receiving, you will be required to use one of two different styles of referencing. You will be asked to use either:

- [Harvard style referencing](#)
- [APA style referencing](#)

See the relevant link for a detailed description of how each type of referencing is done.
Note:

Most modern text editing programs (such as Microsoft Word) includes both APA and Harvard style referencing tools, allowing you to auto-compile the required reference links for your paper.

Appendix

The appendix is an addition to your report and should be placed in the end of the report.

Start this section by inserting a list of appendices, listing the appendices in the same order that they are referenced in the report. The appendices should be numbered sequentially. Make sure that any appendices included are referenced from within the report.

Layout and presentation

The layout and the visual design should support the reading and the content. Remember that the layout is the first thing a reader sees and it can influence the expectations for the overall project.

FONTS AND PAGES

Recommended size is between 10 and 12 depending on the font chosen and the layout.

Most reports are limited to a certain number of pages - this number is measured in unit of "standard pages". A standard page is 2400 characters including spacing. Most programs have a feature to count the number of characters.

FOOTNOTES AND ENDNOTES

Footnotes and endnotes are used for short but necessary comments that cannot be included in the text. Footnotes¹ are placed numerically at the foot of the very same page where direct references are made, while Endnotes² are placed numerically at the end of the essay on a separate page entitled Endnotes or Notes.

Use either footnotes or endnotes – do not mix the two forms of notes.

HEADER AND FOOTER

You are not required to make a header and/or a footer, but these should contain useful information.

The header can be used to inform the reader about the title of the main chapter, which the actual page is a part of (like shown in the top right corner). You could also use the header/footer to inform about title of the project, date, group number and education

ILLUSTRATIONS

This could be pictures, graphics, figures and tables. All illustrations must be numbered consecutively. Most often, the number is placed below the illustration along with a short explanation.

Remember to make a reference to the number of the illustration, when mentioned in the text.

If you use pictures from the Internet, you should make an illustration reference list as well. The structure of these references includes; the picture number, the date and the URL in the back of the report.

MARGINS

When making the margins, remember to make room for binding or punching holes.

¹ This is a footnote and it is number one.

² This is the second one - telling that this information is from a student's guide on how to write footnotes and endnotes.

PAGE NUMBERS

The pages in a report have to be numbered - normally the numbering starts after the title page. The simplest way to do this is by making a page number setting in the master page in your DTP-program.

QUOTES

Quotes can be either in line or in a separate paragraph. In-line quotes should be no longer than 1-2 lines; lengthy quotes are made in a paragraphs.

Formal quotations, cited as documentary evidence, are introduced by a colon and enclosed in quotation marks.

...In *Design Basics* Jim writes: "Variety in spacing, just as in life, adds spice" (Jim Krause, 2004, p. 16). There are more examples of this fact...

Quotations grammatically in apposition or the direct objects of verbs are preceded by a comma and enclosed in quotation marks.

... In his *Design Basics* Jim says, "Variety in spacing, just as in life, adds spice". This means...

These quotes are normally only used for common knowledge and rarely used for documentation.

Quotes in paragraphs stands out a bit more. Remember to make correct quotes.

"Design in art, is a recognition of the relation between various things, various elements in the creative flux. You can't invent a design. You recognize it, in the fourth dimension. That is, with your blood and your bones, as well as with your eyes."

D. H. Lawrence

REFERENCE TO LITERATURE

Any reference to literature should be made clear using name, year of publishing and page number in brackets, for example (Katzenelson 1996, page 175).

The reference to literature should always be consistent with your reference list. This can be made in various ways and you might need to differ from the guidelines in this paper. Year and version might be irrelevant due to the nature of the source, like "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed" (St. Luke, 2. 1).

You might need to use the first publication year in your reference, like (Itten, 1961, p. 178), instead a reference to the version you use. Your reference list should then look like this:

Itten, Johannes (1961): The art of colour. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 2nd edition (1974)

Meaning: The book was first published in 1961, the references goes to the version from 1974.

Above all: Be consistent and use the same kinds of references through the entire report.

FINAL WORDS

Proof reading is important and is a simple way to improve your report. You might have to rewrite your text several times. The quality improves considerably with each revision. Finally – do not hesitate asking the lecturers in case of any doubts or questions concerning these guidelines.