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DESIGN REPORT: WRITING AS A TEAM

ENGG105 Engineering Design for Sustainability

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Three ways to write as a team

1. One person writes the lot
2. Everybody writes one section
3. Writing cooperatively: shared responsibility as planners, writers and reviewers

(From Gibbs, 1994, pp. 53-56)

Writing effectively as a team

- Helping each other at different stages of the writing process
- Using a cooperatively evolving process of brainstorming, planning, researching, note-taking, expanding, drafting, reviewing and re-writing/re-drafting

The writing process



Preparation for team writing

- Task information
- Task marking criteria
- Requirements of a design report
- What else?

How to get started

1. Brainstorm: Discuss and agree on the overall structure of your design report – what sections should it have and what should go into each section?

Make sure everyone understands the function of each section of the report before any further planning is done.

2. Plan: Develop an outline of your report by writing a short paragraph or dot points about the content of each section and subsection of the report. This will guide you on what to write.

On the outline, note any page or word limits that could apply to each section so that no one writes too much.

3. Discuss and refine the outline of the report until:

- you all agree on the planned content of each section
- you all agree on who will research and write the first draft of each section/subsection
- everyone understands how their section/ subsection relates to everyone else's section

Then, decide on team writing roles.

Team writing roles

Writer – Researches and drafts section/subsection on behalf of the team. All team members have this role.

Reviewer – Discusses outline and draft with writer with a view to how it can be improved; reviews finished sections on behalf of team. All team members have this role.

Editor – Improves style, ensures uniformity ('single voice'), and corrects language errors; has strong writing skills

Proof reader – checks with great care for typos, section numbering, references etc; has good attention to detail

Publisher – Makes sure finished report is consistent in layout and looks professional

How a team writing process works

Section	Writer	Reviewer	Editor	Proof-reader	Publisher
1	Person A	B	D	B	C
2	Person B	C	D	B	C
3	Person C	D	D	B	C
4	Person D	A	A	C	C
5	Person A	B	A	C	C
6	Person C	D	A	C	C

Things for reviewers to think about

- Does the purpose and topic of the section align with the agreed outline?
- Are the purpose and topic of the section clear to the reader?
- Are the subsection headings meaningful and appropriate?
- Are the purpose and topic of each paragraph clear?
- Are the paragraphs logically connected?
- Is there evidence of adequate research to support statements (referencing)?

If you think something needs to be changed, say so – it's for the good of the team

Communication: Tips for giving feedback

- First acknowledge what was good about the writer's work, rather than starting with criticisms.
- If you're unsure about what the writer meant, ask them to explain it using speech.
- Offer suggestions without being overtly critical, eg "Do you think 'implement' might be a better word to use here?" or "There are a lot of direct quotes in this part. How could we paraphrase what this source is saying?".

Communication: Tips for receiving feedback

- Given properly, feedback is intended to improve the report, not as a personal criticism.
- Give feedback serious consideration, rather than rejecting it outright.
- If you disagree with the feedback, try to come to an agreement with the reviewer. If you can't, agree to take the paragraph to the whole group for discussion – remember, this is a team assignment.

The final draft

- A longer meeting to discuss the full final draft is a **critical** step to finalising the design report.
- Final edits/re-writes are best done by the editors.

Reference

Gibbs, G 1994, *Learning in teams: A student manual*, The Oxford Centre for Staff Development, Oxford, UK