PRCO304: Final Report

Further guidance on the final report is available in the main project guidelines – in particular Section 5. Please also read carefully the Assessment Criteria which suggest many requirements relating to the contents of the Final Report.

1. Report structure

The report documents your project's products and the processes that supported their development. It will normally conform to the following structure:

- Title [Front Cover] page (template available on the portal)[1]
- Acknowledgements
- Abstract (see the separate document on writing your abstract)
- Table of Contents
- Main body of report
    - Introduction
    - Chapters
    - End-project report (and Recommendations, if applicable)
    - Project post-mortem
    - Conclusions
- Statement of word count
- Reference List[2] (Please note that, whilst we do not demand the use of any particular referencing style, we do expect to see a *properly formatted* reference list: see the essay writing guide for guidance if necessary.)
- Bibliography (optional)

Appendices – in this order please:

- User Guide[3] (As a minimum this should indicate how the product can be installed for demonstration, including details of the (minimum) required platform specification. If appropriate, there should also be information on how the system can be used or operated.)
- Project management artefacts: PID; Highlights; Stage plans; exception reports/plans
- Other materials, e.g., designs, preliminary designs, test results.

[1] Please note that you do NOT need any other coursework front-cover sheet for submission

[2] Needless to say we also expect to see appropriate citations (in the report's main body) to the articles in your reference list.

[3] In the case of software development projects

2. *Main body content*

The variety of projects precludes a definitive statement on the content of a project report, but here's one suggestion for the main body:

- Introduction
- Background, objectives & deliverables
- Literature review (if applicable)
- Method of approach
- Legal, social, ethical and professional issues[4]
- Project management
- Stage 1
- Stage 2
- Stage 3
- Stage 4
- Etc., Etc.
- End-project report
- Project post-mortem
- Conclusions

These are only suggestions and the contents of your particular report should be discussed with your supervisor.

3. *General advice on content*

- Allow yourself plenty of time to write your report and then allow 50% extra on top of that.
- Polish, polish, polish and then polish some more. Don't hand in the first draft (or even the tenth!) Many first/second/third drafts are often *dreadful*.
- Describe your work at a suitable level. The standard advice is that it should be written at a level that could be read by a (good) final stage student. The best reports display author maturity, and demand it from their reader.
- Please put some screen shots in your main body … but too many can be tedious.
- You can gain credit for what you did as well as what you produced. The report should therefore describe both your deliverables *and the processes* by which they were created. Especially consider the activities you carried out that are not obviously visible from the final product. For example, consider requirements elicitation: which methods did you use? Show the reader that you're aware of recognised techniques rather than making it up as you go along: why did you choose them? Describe their enactment and record their findings. What particular problems/challenges did you encounter, and how did

[4] Please include in this section a statement confirming that your project has adhered to the University Ethics Policy.

you solve them? What parts of your work do you think are particularly worthy of credit: bring these out in your report.

- Write up as you go along.
- Do not include significant chunks of code in your report … instead put them on the disk which is attached to the report.

4. Writing your introduction

The abstract and the introduction should both be self-contained, i.e., should be able to stand-alone. Therefore, you will undoubtedly find yourself repeating some of the material from your abstract in your introduction – don't worry about this. Think carefully about your reader: they know nothing about your project, so don't dive straight into the details.

In general terms:

- Who is the client (if you have one)[5]; what are their needs/objectives?
- What are your project's objectives (and how do these relate to the client's objectives)?

This is not intended to be your definitive, precise statement of need and objectives: you can give these in a subsequent chapter. Recall that project scope relates to both what you will do and what you will produce: so you'll have some objectives based upon what you will do (e.g., carry out requirements elicitation).

5. The use of appendices

The appropriate use of appendices is critical.

Firstly, assume that your reader will *not* read your appendices: in other words, make sure that the main body of the report is a self-contained description of your project (at least at some level of abstraction): If the reader *needs* to read something in order to understand your project, then put at least a summary of it in the main body.

- Some things will be too voluminous or detailed to put in the main body, but may be important to the reader's understanding: put a summary in the main body, and the full blown version in an appendix. For example the reader does not want to read pages of test results – put a summary of the testing processes and results in the main body, and the full blown test results in an appendix.
- Material that relates to the wider context (particularly if it is voluminous) is a good candidate for inclusion in an appendix. For example you might be developing an e-Commerce system for a client, and have written a summary describing your client's competitor websites.

[5] If you do not have a real client, then re-read the guidance given on this issue at the end of the PID guidance document in the ProposalPID folder

- Another example would be your choice of software development process. You might write a chapter discussing the pros and cons of the different processes available[6], but this again relates to the wider context – and is also not final stage work: put it in an appendix. Then in the main body justify/describe your chosen process. The main body also needs to describe *how the process was enacted in your project.*
    - The same point also applies to discussions relating to your choice of technologies.

Generally, the main body needs to focus on <u>your</u> <u>project</u> rather than the wider context.

- Another reason for putting material in an appendix is that it is too low level. For example the details of your DB normalisation would normally be in an appendix, with the final schema presented (perhaps as an ERD/LDS) in the main body of the report.
- Another use of appendices can be to include earlier versions of designs: for example initial screen shots – even ones drawn by hand. These can be useful in your description of your process.

Secondly, assume that your reader *will* read your appendices: The quality of presentation in the appendices should be as good as in the main body. Furthermore, the appendices are not a dumping ground for miscellaneous material, and in particular, all appendices should be referenced/cited in the main body of the report; if they aren't, then you might consider why they are included at all.

6. End-project report

An end-project report is produced (say for a Project Board or Client) *as part of* (and towards the end of) a project.

- Brief summary of the project and its achievements.
- Relist your project's objectives and critically (and ruthlessly) evaluate whether you met the objectives. Projects rarely go perfectly, and an inability to find any real criticism will possibly be met with some suspicion. If your work is for a real client, try to involve them in this evaluation (and include details of their feedback).
- Realisation of business objectives (either to-date or planned).
- Changes made during the project, their reasons and effects.

[6] This is also clearly textbook-oriented material … another good reason for delegating it to an appendix

7. The post-mortem

A post-mortem is often carried out shortly after a project is over. Looking back (and indeed standing back), you can now evaluate/critically appraise any aspect of the project (although you do not need to repeat any evaluations that were made as part of the project/end-project report). *For example*:

- Were the project objectives the right ones to adopt?
- Was the product properly specified (in relation to the business objectives)?
- The relationship between the project and the client.
- Was the chosen development process the right one?
- Were the chosen technologies the right ones?
- Was PRINCE2 appropriately tailored to the project?
- Your own performance (try to be specific).
- Wider reflections on Client feedback.
- Generally, lessons to be learnt for the future

8. Conclusions: Final, brief, summarising conclusions.

9. Ethical considerations: You should ensure that your report conforms to the University Ethics policy. For example, if the results of user-testing are included, then participants should not be identifiable.

10. Plagiarism and referencing

- You should adhere to accepted norms regarding referencing, paraphrasing, and plagiarism. See Section 3.7 of the University guide to essay writing in the FinalReportDemo folder. Please note that we submit project products (e.g., code, report) to plagiarism detection devices.

11. Style

- The report should be professionally presented and word processed with (approx.) 1.15 line spacing on good quality A4 paper. We recommend that you print double-sided, but do make sure that you use sufficiently wide margins so that the text is not obscured by the binding. Pages should be numbered consecutively except for the title page. Please us Calibri 12pt (although other sans serif fonts are acceptable if their use is desired).

- Sections and sub-sections should employ nested numbering, e.g., Section 1, sub-sections 1.1, 1.2, etc., sub-sub-sections 1.1.1, 1.1.2[7]. This is really important in helping the reader to follow the structure of your report.
- Use good grammar, and make sure that you understand the proper uses of punctuation symbols such as: comma, semi-colon, colon, and apostrophe. Avoid overly long sentences: 30 words is generally too long.
- Avoid *unnecessary* repetition.
- The standard academic style (to which you should conform) is past tense, third-person.
- Use passive forms when possible (e.g., 'the software was tested' not 'I tested the software').
- Try to be formal in style; avoid slang and colloquial language.
- Avoid being conversational in style. Try to avoid personal pronouns such as 'I', 'me', 'my', 'we', 'you', 'he', 'she' and try to avoid other personalisations such as 'the author', and 'the student'. However do also use your common sense … otherwise following a given prescription when it becomes inappropriate can result in writing that feels artificial.
- Do use phrases such as 'this project', 'the program', 'the respondents' (and do use 'it' or 'they' to avoid excessive repetitions of these). Refer to yourself ('the author' – possibly followed by 'I' or 'my') only when you are clearly stating your own personal opinion – most obviously in the post-mortem.

[7] In terms of the numbering, don't go beyond 3 levels.