An Example Report

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Abstracts should usually be no more than 100-150 words. They provide a brief summary of the report including the methods used, the key findings and conclusions. An example of a two-line abstract of this report follows: Provides an outline of an example report and a summary of the main elements a report should include. Includes a Report Writing checklist for use by students.

1   Introduction

This report provides an example structure for a report. Each section is considerably shorter than it would need to be for a full academic report. The intention is to provide an overview of the main sections that most reports should have.

2   Literature review

Having introduced my topic, I should then review what the literature has to say about it. If it were a technical report, I might want to introduce the theory behind my approach here. There is plenty of advice on report writing including books such as Houp (2006) and Lewis (1994), and web pages (Loughborough University Library, 2006a). My citations should appear as a list of references below. In this report I have used the Harvard Citation style (Loughborough University Library, 2006b).

3   Methodology

If this were a research report, I would outline my methodology at this stage. I should need to include enough detail so that someone else wishing to follow my procedures could do so and achieve the same results as me. This may not necessarily mean detailing the methods at great length, but should at least reference the literature which does describe my methods. Any limitations of the methodology (i.e. a lack of time or inappropriate equipment) should be made clear at this stage. This demonstrates critical thinking and reflection and should give you better, not worse, marks.

4   Results

Once the methodology has been outlined, I should then report on my results. The implications of the results should not be discussed at this stage – that comes later. At this point I should just describe my findings, perhaps using sub-headings as detailed below. The order in which you report your results should be logical and structured.

4.1   Case Study One

If a series of case studies had been performed, I could use sub-headings to describe the results from each.

4.2   Case Study Two

By using sub-headings in this way the reader can go straight to the section they are interested in without having to read the whole report.

4.2.1 Experiment One

It is possible to divide sub-sections down further by adding a third-order sub-heading with an additional number.

4.2.2 Experiment Two

Do not use more than three levels of numbering, fourth-order headings should just be italicised as below.

Fourth-order sub-heading
This is an example of a fourth-order sub-heading.

5 Discussion

After outlining my results I can then discuss their meaning. The presentation of my discussion is entirely up to me. I could discuss the most important results first, followed by more minor findings. Alternatively, I could discuss the findings chronologically or geographically.

6 Conclusions

Having discussed the results, I can now draw some conclusions from them. My conclusions should not only refer to my primary research, but they should be set in the context of the literature and any limitations of my methodology.

7 Recommendations

If recommendations are required by the report, they could be made at this stage. They could either be recommendations for action, or recommendations for further research. Or both!

References

HOUP, Kenneth W., *Reporting technical information*, 11th Edition, Oxford University Press, 2006
LEWIS, Roger and John Inglis, *How to write reports : the key to successful reports*, Collins Educational [and] National Extension College, 1994
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. (2006a) *Study Skills : Report Writing.* URL http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library/skills/report.html [Accessed 20 November, 2006]
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. (2006b) *Ethical use of information: plagiarism and citation.* URL http://learn.lboro.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3606 [Accessed 24 November, 2008]

Appendix A – Report Writing Checklist

When you have completed writing your technical report, refer to the following checklist. Put a cross in each of the following checkboxes ☒ when you are happy that you have achieved each point.

☐ Are the purpose and aims clear?

☐ Are readers needs taken into account?

☐ Are the main points included?

☐ Are the points supported by evidence?

☐ Is all the information relevant to the purpose?

☐ Is there any (unnecessary) repetition?

☐ Is the order logical?

☐ Are the headings and numbering clear?

☐ Is the information presented clearly?

☐ Do figures add up?

☐ Is there a good use of graphics?

☐ Is the language clear and easy to understand?

☐ Is the style formal?

☐ Is the tone suited to the purpose?

☐ Are the any unnecessary words or phrases?

☐ Is the grammar and punctuation correct?

☐ Is the spelling ok?

☐ Are the conclusions and recommendations clearly linked to the purpose and based on findings?