



KTH Datavetenskap
och kommunikation

Kerstin Frenckner, kfrenck@csc.kth.se
Copyright CSC

25 mars 2009

CHECKLIST FOR THE DEGREE PROJECT REPORT

This checklist has been written to help you check that your report matches the demands that are put by CSC on language and typography of an advanced level degree project report.

Comments on this checklist are more than welcome. The goal is to make the next version much better.

Work your way through the checklist marking the boxes as you check your report. If there is a point that you consider not applicable to your report, then do not mark it but write a comment explaining why you think the point is not applicable.

The checklist must be handed in to your exjobb administrator.

General

It is often a good idea to write a short introductory paragraph to each chapter and subchapter. This text should tell the reader what the chapter is about and motivate why the chapter is there.

If there is a subchapter to a chapter, there should normally be at least two. This gives the text a nice tree structure.

- ☐ The report has a logical structure so that the reader in a natural way is introduced to your problem, the theoretical background, your methods, your implementation of the methods, your results, and your conclusions.
- ☐ The reader must understand what your statements are based upon. This means that your statements must either obviously be true or based on one of the following:
 - a source to which you give a reference
 - argumentation in your report that leads to the statement
 - your own work (e.g. experiments or calculations), where it must be obvious which results lead to your statement

- your personal ideas and opinions – in this case you must clearly state that this is what the statement is based upon
- ☐ The following parts are included in the report in the order mentioned below and each part begins on a new page:
 - 1 Preliminary title page
 - 2 Abstract written in English
 - 3 Title and abstract written in Swedish. If both abstracts fit into one page it is often a good idea to have them on the same page.
 - 4 Preface (optional)
 - 5 Table of contents
 - 6 The chapters in the report, where the last chapter is the list of references. Each chapter may (but must not) start on a new page.
 - 7 Appendices (optional)

The reports are published on the web. This means that they must be suited for one-sided as well as two-sided printing. In order to get a fair printed version of the report we will put some empty papers into the beginning of the report.

- ☐ The introductory pages (up to and including the table of contents) do not have page numbers and the first page of the first chapter begins on page 1. Page numbers are centered.

Plagiarism

- ☐ All text has been written by you yourself with the following exceptions: a. Text within quotation marks, b. Titles etc. of the works in the reference list c. The abstract in Swedish d. Any text that appears also in a fellow student's report and where you have clearly stated that this is the case.

Formalities

Check the following points:

- ☐ The report is written in correct English
- ☐ The report has been conscientiously proofread. The number of typos and spelling errors is very low. Note that it is not sufficient to run the spell checker.
- ☐ The report follows the norms for a scientific report.
- ☐ If the provider of the project does not oppose against it, the name of the provider of the project and the name of the supervisor at the provider should be stated.
- ☐ If a person is mentioned by name in the report, you have the person's permission to publish his name. The name of the CSC supervisor and examiner may always be published as well as the names mentioned in the reference list.

Some parts of the report

Title page

CSC makes a final title page where the title in the language of the report and your name are written.

- ☐ There is a preliminary title page with: your name, your KTH e-mail adress, the title in Swedish, the title in English, the subject (e.g. computer science), the name of the supervisor, the name of the examiner, the provider and the current date

Abstracts

The second most important part of the report is the abstract (the title is most important). Check that:

- ☐ There is an abstract in English and in Swedish. The English abstract is placed first.
- ☐ The Swedish title is placed by the the Swedish abstract.
- ☐ The abstract can be published separately from the report; it does not contain references and (at least preferably not) pictures.

Table of contents

The report has a table of contents. Check that:

- ☐ Abstract, table of contents etc. are not in the table of contents.
- ☐ The list of references is in the table of contents.
- ☐ Italics are not used (the column with page numbers looks so weird with italics)
- ☐ Capitals are not used for whole words, at least not in the sub-chapters
- ☐ Bold letters are used sparsely or not at all.
- ☐ No words or letters are underlined.

List of references

The list of references is placed as the last chapter of the report – before any appendices. Check that:

- ☐ The list of references contains all the works you are referencing to and no others (other works that you think may be of interest to the reader may be put in a separate list).
- ☐ The list is assembled using an established norm for scientific reports and contains enough information about each work that the reader can understand what type of work it is and find it.

Appendices

Information that may be of interest to those who want to penetrate your work in depth may be put in appendices. Check that:

- ☐ The appendices are last in the report (after the list of references)
- ☐ The appendices are numbered (Appendix 1, Appendix 2 etc. or Appendix A, Appendix B etc).
- ☐ The pages are numbered. The first page of each appendix may have number 1, or the numbering may be consecutive through the whole report (if the last page of the report has number 44 then the first page of the first appendix has number 45).
- ☐ Each appendix starts on a new page.

Typography

- ☐ The report has a consistent and traditional typographic design.

The page

Margins

- ☐ The typography is suitable for printing on A4 paper
- ☐ The top and bottom margins are about 25 mm.

It is up to you to decide whether to use one or two columns. You may also choose to write some parts using single column and other parts using two columns. If you do so you must carefully choose where to change. If you use single column, please check the following:

- ☐ The left and right margins are large enough so that the lines do not get too long. Avoid lines of more than 80 characters.
- ☐ The left and right margins may be equal. Either of them may also be larger.

If you use two columns, please check the following:

- ☐ The left and right margins are about 20–25 mm.
- ☐ The gutter between the columns is large enough to prevent reading across it.
- ☐ The chapter headlines are written using the whole page width (single column format). It may be a good idea to put them on top of a new page.
- ☐ Whenever single column parts appear it is evident that they are single column.

Line spacing

It is up to you to decide on line spacing, but it must be suitable for the text (a text containing formulas, indices etc. usually needs larger line spacing).

- ☐ Line spacing is large enough that downstrokes (on e.g. g) and upstrokes (on e.g. h) do not meet.
- ☐ Line spacing is small enough that the text does not look sparse.
- ☐ Line spacing is constant in the body text (it may not be larger where e.g. indices appear).

Hyphenation

It is up to you to decide whether you want a right justified text or not.

- ☐ The report is hyphenated and all hyphenations are proofread. If your text is right justified or in two columns the text is strongly hyphenated (if not hyphenation is only necessary whenever an evidently short line would otherwise appear).

Page breaks

There are no page breaks in the following places:

- ☐ In a headline or directly after.
- ☐ Between a figure or a table and its legend.
- ☐ Within a figure or a table.

Headers and footers

It is up to you to design page headers and footers. Please check the following::

- ☐ Page number is in the header or footer and is centered.
- ☐ The title of the report or the chapter or the author name may be placed in the header. (In this case it is usually a good idea to put the page number in the footer.) The header is at most two lines. A thin line may be used to separate the header from the body text.

- ☐ The logotype or other information internal to the provider of the exjobb may not be put in the header or the footer.
- ☐ Date and version number are not in the header or the footer (may be good for a working paper but not for the final version).

Headlines

It is up to you to decide whether to number the chapters or not. Headlines on the lowest level need not to be numbered even if headlines on higher levels are.

- ☐ The number of headline levels does preferably not exceed four and definitely not five.
- ☐ Headlines on higher levels are more outstanding than headlines on lower levels. The white space above the headline (and possibly below) is larger for headlines on a higher level.
- ☐ All headlines on the same level have a consistent design that clearly distinguishes them from headlines on other levels. This design includes the white space above and below the headline.
- ☐ Only headlines on the lowest level may be written in italics.
- ☐ The white space before each headline is larger than the white space below it (the headline belongs to the text that follows it).
- ☐ Any headlines that do not fit on one line are divided so that a pleasant balance between the lines is achieved.
- ☐ If the headlines are numbered, the number is not followed by a period.

Paragraphs

It is up to you to decide whether to mark a new paragraph by using indentation or white space.

- ☐ New paragraphs are marked in a consistent way throughout the report.
- ☐ If new paragraphs are marked using white space, it is approximately the same as or slightly less than the line spacing (distance between the base lines, that letters like x stand on).
- ☐ If new paragraphs are marked using indentation, this indentation is approximately as large as the line spacing. Indentation should preferably not be made at places where it is evident that there is a new paragraph as after headlines or figures.

Lists

Lists usually look better if they are bulleted or numbered. Please check that:

- ☐ All lists are written using the same design with hanging indent (the second and any following lines are indented to where the text of the first line starts).

Emphasizing or marking

Text that in some way is special (e.g. names of buttons, functions or similar) or is important may be marked in some way.

- ☐ If italics, bold or special fonts are used to mark special parts of text, this is done in a consistent way..
- ☐ Underlining is not used.

Punctuation marks etc.

You should, of course, learn the English punctuation rules. Some mistakes are very common. So please check:

- ☐ Punctuation marks are used according to the rules of the English language.
- ☐ The citation marks (“ and ”) are used correctly as well as the marks for inch and foot ("and ").
- ☐ Any enumeration is preceded by a colon (not semicolon).
- ☐ There are no hyphens where there ought to be dashes.
- ☐ Non breaking spaces are used where line breaks should be avoided, e.g. between a number and the unit of measure or within long numbers.
- ☐ A number is not immediately followed by another number (do not write: 256 32 bit words).

Illustrations

Figures

All figures must be made with care so that they are clear and make it easier for the reader to understand the text. Please check the following:

- ☐ All figures are numbered and have a legend beneath the figure. The numbering may be the same throughout the report or may restart for each chapter (e.g. figure 3–1).
- ☐ The numbering is correct.
- ☐ The legends have a consistent design that makes them stand out from the body text. Usually they are written in italics.
- ☐ For each figure there is a reference in the text (see figure 12) so that the reader knows when to look at the figure and what the writer wants to convey with it.
- ☐ All figures are placed reasonably close to the references to them (if there are several references to the same figure some of them may be far from the figure).
- ☐ The amounts of white space between the figure and the legend, between the the text above the figure and the figure, and between the legend and the text below the figure are reasonable and consistent. There is no extra white space.
- ☐ A figure does not immediately follow a headline.
- ☐ All figures are understandable in grey scale. (There are no references to “the green square” or the like.) Images illustrating changes in color are excepted and placed in a special appendix.
- ☐ All figures are sharp when printed on paper.
- ☐ No pixels are visible when figures are printed on paper – excepted are screen shots or other images where a low resolution is necessary.
- ☐ Any background colors are light and are solid rather than dotted when printed on paper.
- ☐ For figures that you have not produced yourself there ought to be a permission from the person/company having the right to the figure. Then there is a reference to the source in the legend and a statement that you have permission to use the figure (courtesy ...). As a minimum there is a reference to the source in the legend.

- ☐ If there is an identifiable person on the images, you have the the person's permission to publish it.
- ☐ All notations in the figure are consistent with what is used in the text.

Diagrams

A diagram is a special kind of figure. So what has been said about figures applies also to diagrams. But also check the following:

- ☐ All diagrams clearly illustrate what they are supposed to illustrate.
- ☐ Any text in the diagram and on the axes is large enough to be legible.
- ☐ All lines in a line diagram are clearly visible; if it is important to distinguish between the lines then this is possible.
- ☐ If values are to be extracted from the diagram, there are clear marks on the axes.
- ☐ Diagrams illustrating 2D data are 2D.

Tables

Tables often give a clear presentation of data provided that:

- ☐ All tables are numbered in a separate series and have a legend that is preferably placed above the table.
- ☐ All table legends have the same typographical design and this is consistent with the design of the figure legends.
- ☐ The tables contain lines only where they are necessary to separate different kinds of data (e.g. to separate column headers from the data columns). This means that there is no grid in the table.
- ☐ In columns containing numbers that should be compared, the numbers should be placed with the decimal commas below each other (use the decimal tab stop) to make the comparison easier.
- ☐ If all values in the column have the same unit, the unit is specified in the column header.
- ☐ The contents in a column is placed approximately centered below the column heading.
- ☐ The width of a table and its columns are adjusted according the contents (not to the width of the page).

Formulas

If there are formulas in the report, please check the following:

- ☐ All formulas are written according to the conventions of mathematics.
- ☐ If the formulas are numbered, the numbers are written in parenthesis on the right hand side following the conventions of mathematics.

Language

Of course it is impossible to write a list of all possible mistakes that might be found in a report. So here is a list of some common mistakes that you must check especially:

- ☐ All parts of the text have approximately the same formal level of language and this is adjusted to the contents of the report. Parts where it is natural to give more personal views, like preface and consequences, may be less formal. (A report describing the development of new algorithms for cryptography and filled with propositions, proofs, and lemmas should be more formal than a report describing a user study of a meeting place on Internet.)
- ☐ If “we” is used, it is always evident who we are.
- ☐ If “you” is used it is always evident who you are.
- ☐ Transitions between using I, you, and we and passives are either not used at all or sparse and natural.
- ☐ The text does not contain long and complicated sentences. Sentences should normally not exceed 30 words.
- ☐ The text does not contain complicated passives. If passives are used it is evident who does something.
- ☐ The tense or tenses used in the report are correct and consistent. (In the part describing the goal of the work it is common that future tense is used although the work has already been done – has the text been copied from the specification?).
- ☐ All elements in a list have the same linguistic form. (Do not write: bananas, bread, wash the car...)
- ☐ All lists are preceded by a text telling what you are listing.
- ☐ All references are correct. (Do not write: the user...they...)
- ☐ There are no references to a title. (Do not write: The Think Aloud Method. This method...)
- ☐ All sentences start with a normal word that is capitalized. (Do not write: 2003 the project...)
- ☐ The subject of the sentence can actually do what the verb says. (Do not write: The report analyzes...)
- ☐ The same word is used consistently for the same artefact. (If you are writing about a gadget with a small window showing numbers and decide to call it number display, it is always called number display.)
- ☐ Each term is always written in the same way and similar terms are written consistently. (If you decide to capitalize Java, it should be done consistently throughout the report.)
- ☐ All terms not evidently understood by the reader are explained the first time they appear. If they do not appear again until after several pages they are explained again – or at least to be found in a glossary.
- ☐ Abbreviations are used only where they facilitate for the reader. (Keep in mind that the reader is likely to be much less familiar with terms that you have been used to during your work.)
- ☐ Something may be exact, but nothing can be more exact (it may be more accurate or have higher precision).
- ☐ The word data is normally plural (several values).
- ☐ Your project is called project and your report is called report or thesis. (Thesis work does not exist.)
- ☐ Numbers are written according to normal rules (decimal comma is international standard).

- ☐ Any times given are absolute and not relative. (Write “the fall of 2002” and not “last fall”.)

Specifically English

- ☐ All sentences have a subject and a noun. (Do not write: “All in an effort to keep the frame rate as high as possible.”)
- ☐ Subject and noun fit with each other. (Do not write: “most games does not run”).
- ☐ The apostrophe is not left out in genitives using s-form. (Do write: “user’s needs”, “Bayes’ theorem.”)
- ☐ Informal language, such as hard (except in complexity theory), cool, huge, ok, bunch of, is not used. Neither are it’s, doesn’t etc. used.
- ☐ Words that sound similar are correctly spelled and used. (Differ between “to” and “too”, “where” and “were”, “there” and “their”.)
- ☐ Articles are used whenever needed. Nouns without an ending or an article are not so common.
- ☐ Since al. is an abbreviation it is followed by a period. (Write: Dix et al., 1998)
- ☐ Capitalization is done in a consistent way in headlines (It is up to you to decide whether to capitalize only the first word and proper nouns or all important words.)
- ☐ The report is written in British or US English (no mixture).
- ☐ Any dates are written in a way that can not be misunderstood. (Americans often swap day and month.)