Assessment 2a – General Feedback

Formal vs informal references

When introducing a feature, introduce it formally along with the desired informal reference in brackets. For example: android application (app). From here, you can refer to it as an app throughout the rest of the report.

Other examples where this applies include: user interface (UI), unique identifier (UID), International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI), and MIT App Inventor 2 Platform (AI2).

Consistent object references

Please use the same reference to an object throughout the report. For example, a student ID should always be referred to as a student ID. Do not interchange between student ID, student number, ID, etc. Other examples include: server vs database, and app vs client vs program.

Introducing a new object

Some reports begin referencing a new object, before it has been defined. The most common example of this was regarding the server, where a paragraph within the report suddenly discusses sending information to the server, yet the server and its role had not been introduced.

If your report contains a statement such as "the app is required to send information to the server", please ensure you have explained what the server is, as well as its purpose, before this statement is made.

Representation of numbers in report writing

This can be tricky to get the hang of. The general rule is that counting numbers from zero to nine should be written in full, while numbers over 10 should be displayed using Arabic numerals. This rule does not apply when presenting information in tables, formula's, currencies, numbered lists, etc.

Images and discussion

Several reports contain images of code blocks, yet the discussion provided for the code block was incorrect. Please ensure that all images used in the report are congruent with the message you are trying to convey. If the standard image provided in a tutorial solution does not entirely capture the functionality being discussed, then it would be wiser to create a new block of code, from which you can derive a better image.

References

Some students are advised to review formal referencing styles (APA, Chicago, Harvard, etc). Note that any formal style was acceptable for this assessment. Some students are also advised to pay attention to in-line referencing. For more information, ask for a quick and dirty guide to referencing during a lab one day.

Being specific

If an idea is introduced, please ensure it is expanded or specified. For example: “Further research into options for the QR code is needed”. This doesn’t provide a great deal of information. What research is needed? Why is it needed? Are you sure it is needed? The trick here is to ensure that any statements made have a clear reason for being.

Technical Writing

Now that you have had a go at writing a report, I implore you to review the lecture provided on technical writing. These are the top three pieces of advice I can provide for this class:

Keep it simple. The reports which were the best had clear skeletons (sections, sub-sections, sub-sub-sections) and kept discussion focused to one concept per paragraph. The sentence structure was clear, with no more than one conjunction applied. In this way, the information presented was modular, allowing for easy comprehension.

Keep it impersonal. That is, do not use personal pro-nouns (“I’, “we”, “our”, “he”, “she”, etc). Instead, try to use neutral language, for example: “for these reasons, it has been decided that <the feature> will not be incorporated into the final product”.

Keep it decisive. A technical report should use hard language that showcases what the features are. Some reports discuss features in a way that does not instill a sense of confidence in the product.

For example: “The product is unable to validate student numbers, with exception of fist letters beginning with a c and checking the length of the string”.

This could be written as: “The product will validate user input, to ensure student numbers provided contain the required number of characters, as well as beginning with the letter c”.

While the statements are equivalent, the latter keeps it specific to what the product can do, and uses language which does not suggest weakness in the product.