**Title Slide**

Hi, I’m Jamie. I’m a 3rd Year BIT student and today I’m going to be teaching you a little bit about report writing and referencing.

**Introduction Slide**

So first off, who likes writing reports? Hands up for yes? Hands up for no? right. And who likes writing references? Hands up, yes? No? That’s ok! You’re IT students, it’s very normal for us to not want to spend our time writing! We like to do things, we like to write code, we like to be creative with web designs, we like to build things physically. But it is important that we know how to communicate information to others. In this course and in any other course you may take in the future you will have to write. And that means that we need to know how to do it effectively. So, let’s get started and see if we can make it a less daunting process!

**Plan Slide**

So, what are we going to cover today?

First, we will cover report structure

Then the differences between academic and technical reports

A quick look at using images

Plagiarism and how to avoid it!

Referencing Types and how to reference

Some general writing and formatting advice

Then we are going to do a couple of small activities and hopefully we will still have some time for questions.

**Cover Pages**

So, cover pages. These are very simple; you can make them yourself or if you’re using Word you can have predesigned cover pages inserted into your report. I personally prefer the predesigned word cover pages as I tend to get fussy about images and alignment which means I waste a lot of time doing something I don’t really need to spend time on. Usually, you will be told what needs to be included if a cover page is required but I tend to add them to all my assignments because I just feel it makes them look more appealing. A cover page should just include relevant information. So, I have my own cover page example here for an assignment I’m handing in shortly and you’ll see that doesn’t contain much. Just the name of the assignment, what paper it’s for, my name and student ID number and my campus and semester date. Simple as that!

**Abstract/Executive Summary**

Most reports will be prefaced with an abstract or executive summary. An abstract is a summary of a research project that includes any important points or findings. An executive summary is a brief document that condenses a report or research proposal. Both allow the report reader to get an understanding of what the report is about. Which is great because it means that the reader can gain a lot of information without getting into intense details if they don’t need to. It is a good way to check if what you’re reading is relevant to your research without wasting a lot of time. These shouldn’t exceed a page; in fact, many don’t exceed half a page of writing.

**Contents Page**

Now I’m sure you all know what a contents page is, but they do serve a purpose. When you access a report online a contents page means you can quickly jump down to the relevant section and like an executive summary. It gives you an idea of what is going to be covered in the report. Make sure you give your sections clear and descriptive names that match the headings you put in the contents.

**Introduction**

An introduction should cover the aim of the report and how you plan to carry out your research or investigation. It should also cover the scope of the report. Don’t ramble in it, you want to give the reader a clear and concise overview of your plan.

**The Body**

The body of the report is everything that goes in between the introduction and conclusion of your report. This includes any methods, results, and discussions. For you, this will be any information or sections that you have been asked to include in your report.

**Conclusion/Recommendations**

All reports or papers should finish with a conclusion. Which is just writing an overview of everything you learnt during your research. No new information should be added to this that hasn’t already been covered somewhere else in the report. The same goes for an abstract or executive summary. Whatever you say in those must be written and explained somewhere in the body of your report. Sometimes you will be asked to write recommendations based on your research, sometimes you will be asked for both.

**References**

References should come directly after your conclusion and or recommendations. These should be formatted appropriately, which we will cover shortly.

**Appendices/Appendix**

Appendices are anything that needs to be included in the report but aren’t part of the main body of the report. Basically, they are further information. For example, if during your report you discussed interviewing someone and perhaps quoted them. It would be appropriate to include a transcript of that interview as an appendix. Now if you have more than one item in your list, your heading should be “appendices” if you are only added one thing, then you should state the heading as “appendix”.

**Academic vs. Technical Reports**

So you might have heard people talk about academic writing vs. technical writing, in regards to reports. Technical reports are quite specific, and they have a very targeted audience. They usually cover the conveying of technical information, such as research into a system upgrade with a discussion of impacts this might have on current systems. The language used is very straightforward. Whereas academic reports and writing are usually more focused on theories and discussion of those theories. Or discussion of research that was undertaken and how that compares to previous research. If you stay in IT you will continue with technical writing and won’t have to worry about academic writing which is great because you’ll avoid writing literature reviews which are an absolute nightmare to write. I know from personal experience.

**Using Images**

Now when it comes to images. Only include images that are relevant to the report and the information you’re giving in that section. If it’s not relevant, don’t include it. Also, you need to reference the images if you don’t own them. Images should be appropriately formatted. They should be centered and a suitable size for the reader, they shouldn’t have to enlarge an image to understand it. If this is the case, you should consider breaking the image down into smaller parts and enlarging it. You should also consider adding a title or short explanation of the image if it not made completely clear in the section already.

**Plagiarism**

I know plagiarism can be a bit of a scary word but it’s very easy to avoid. That’s why correct referencing is so important. If something is not your idea, it should be referenced. Where possible always paraphrase over quoting. Because this helps demonstrate your own understanding of the topic. You should only quote when it is absolutely necessary or if by paraphrasing it would take meaning away from the quote.

**Reference Types**

Now there actually a lot of different ways to reference. These are just some common examples. We will focus on APA7 as that is what is generally used throughout polytech and probably one of the most common styles of referencing that you will use throughout your studies.

**References**

Now we’ve already discussed where a reference list should go in a report, just after the conclusion but before the appendices if you have them. I also know that you have already had some experience in referencing so we will just quickly have a look at an example of a reference list.

**Reference List Example**

See here, how each reference is correctly formatted, it is also in alphabetical order. There’s a really quick and easy way to do this in word which I can show you later if we have time. Also, each reference is indented from the second line.

**Intext Referencing**

Now in-text referencing is the easiest part of referencing and the best way to avoid getting pinged for plagiarism. There are online sites that you can run your assignments through that will check for online similarities that can assist you too, these help you make sure that the bulk of your information is your own words and anything else is correctly quoted and referenced. Let’s look at an example.

**Quote Reference Example**

This is an example for a quote, see how the page number is included? If you’re quoting, an in-text reference must state exactly where that quote can be found.

**General Advice**

Now for some general report writing advice.

* Start early, start the day you get your assignment. Even if all you do is create a word document with a cover page, contents page and some headings. Just writing out your headings is a really good way to break down your assignments, you can aim to write a section each day or every couple of days and use this as your assignment plan.
* Don’t proofread immediately after writing something. What you’ve written is too fresh in your head and you won’t pick up on your own mistakes. When I’m writing an assignment, I write a draft section and either call it a day or move on to something completely different. I proofread that section the next time I’m working on the assignment. That way I’m far less likely to miss errors and typos. Even better is having someone else proofread for you, what makes sense to you may not make sense to the reader.
* Stick to what you’ve been asked to do. Refer back to your assignment handout and marking rubric often, this will help stop any rambling or missing vital points that you should include.
* Make sure your information is relevant to the scope of your project. Especially images!
* Always reference as you go, it is very annoying having to go back and find where you read something. It will save you a lot of time later if you reference throughout your assignment writing, rather than doing it at the very end.
* Get feedback from your lecturers. If you’re not sure about something, ask! Don’t lose marks because you weren’t sure. Your lecturers are a resource to your studies, use them!
* Save things as you go, make use of your one drive at tech. NEVER only save things locally. If something happens to your computer or laptop and you can’t get it working again…YOU WILL LOSE EVERYTHING!
* Finally, formatting – Don’t have big empty spaces between headings and sections. Be consistent with your spacing, headings and fonts. Choose a font style and size that is easy on the eyes and keep using this style throughout the report. Keep your text left aligned but center your images! Also make use of the line spacing feature on Word, it makes reading much easier.

**Activities**

Ok now, we are going to create a report template together and reference a quote in it. But before we jump into that, does anyone have any questions?

**Questions**

**No? great!**

Let’s get started. If everyone could please open a blank word document on your computer and I will do this will you step by step….

**References**

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