Project Support

Professor Matthew Leeke
School of Computer Science
University of Birmingham

Your Project Report

The Golden Rules

The rules we talked about still apply:

Your supervisor is the most important person to speak to about your project

Taking ownership and making sensible decisions is vital to success

Developing a plan and executing on it always beat genius IQ

Project Report Admin

Project Report - Suggested Word Counts

40-credit projects: 8,000 words

60-credit projects: 10,000 words

Adding filler to your report won't attract credit

Missing obvious and important content will mean missing out on credit

Concentrate on writing valuable content that communicates the quality of your project

Project Report Structure

Project Report - How Should I Approach Writing?

Plan the structure of your report

Titles and subtitles

Can you write a comment on what goes in each subsection?

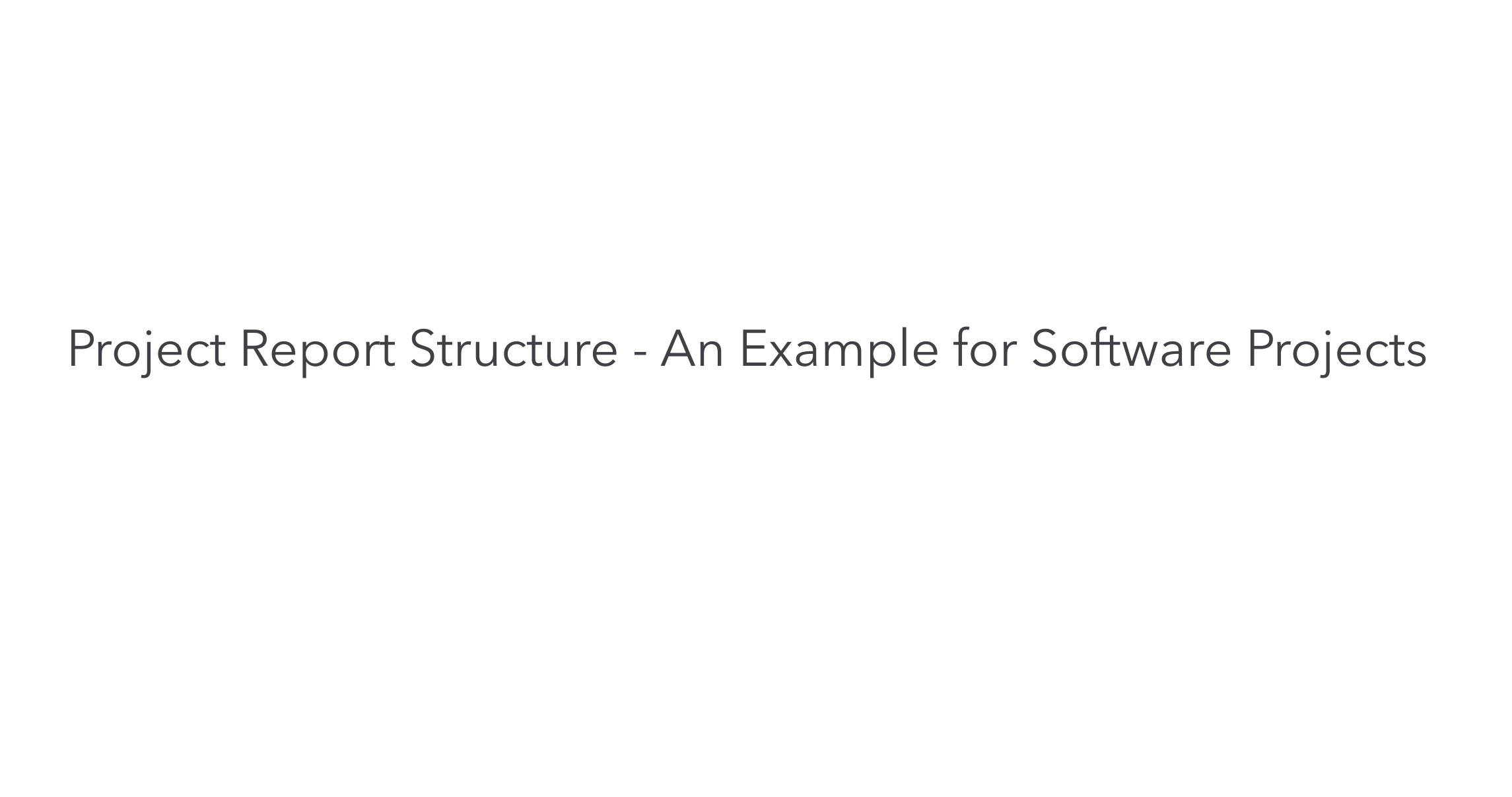Do these comments tell the story that you want?

Draft. Read. Redraft. Reread. Redraft. Reread. Redraft. Reread...

How Do I Know If My Project Report Structure Works?

There is no single, perfect way to write-up a final year project

There are many possible projects structures that could work for your project

Always speak to your Supervisor about what they're expecting!

Project Report Structure - An Example for Software Projects

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Abstract - Usually 100-300 words stating the salient points of the report. It should help your reader to decide whether the report is relevant to her or his interests.

Introduction - The introduction should provide content for the report, discuss relevant background material, identify stakeholders, and state the aim(s) of the work.

Research - This is often referred to the 'literature review' section. It is one of the most important section of the Project Proposal and the Project Report. It is where you demonstrate that you understand the state-of-the-art in the field you're working. Towards the end of this sections it's normally a good idea to explain how your aim / work / idea / contribution differs from the nearest work in the field.

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Legal, Social, Ethical and Professional Issues - Address the legal, social, ethical, and professional issues associated with your project. Find something to say for each. For example, listening for legal, BCS Code of Conduct for professional, etc..

System Requirements - This section should detail your understanding of what you are planning to create. The section should aim to break down the overarching aims of the work into clear, measurable requirements that can be used in the evaluation of the project. This is why we often function of functional and non-functional requirements.

Design - Communicating how you think about the composition of your system and how it works. You might detail the ways in which the overall system will be broken down into subsystems. Detail should then be provided on the design of each of these subsystems.

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Implementation - This section should discuss how you went about developing a system that was consistent with your design to meet your stated requirements. The implementation of subsystems should be accurately documented, with any implementation difficulties being acknowledged. The Design and Implementation sections can be grouped in the Project Report, if these are tightly coupled. Likely omitted for the Project Proposal, though should mention your proposed implementation technologies somewhere.

Testing and Success Measurement - As well as documenting system testing, this section should also describe any unit testing or integration testing performed. If you are not familiar with unit, integration or system testing then it would be a good idea to investigate these notions and consider about how they relate to your project. This section might also detail any performance, reliability or usability testing performed, with quantification, i.e., numeric measurements, being used wherever possible. All those points are systems focused through. If you're doing something that's research focused or more of a social / analytical study then you need to think about how you'll measure success.

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Project Management - What is the timeline for your project? What software development methodology will you use? Can you identify the major milestones? These types of questions are important for project planning and should be addressed directly.

Evaluation - Usually you evaluate your project with regard to the functional and non-functional requirements you set out in the earlier chapter. This doesn't necessary mean that your project was successful but, if these requirements were appropriately specified, you it's likely that your project was successful. You might be reiterating some points from the Testing and Success Measurement chapter in your Project Report.

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Conclusion - Generally speaking, section can take different forms - as a minimum you would normally provide a brief summary of your project work and a discussion of possible future work. You may also wish to reiterate the main outcomes of your project and give some idea of how you think the ideas dealt with by your project relate to real-world situations, etc.. For the Proposal, don't mention future work but do summarise your document.

References - Referencing is vital when building on the work of others. You may use any style of referencing but you should be consistent. All forms of plagiarism are taken extremely seriously. This is the first section that most markers will turn to when presented with a proposal or report.

A Project Report Structure for Software Projects

Appendices - Some information, for example program listings, is useful to include within the report for completeness, but would distract the reader from the flow of the discussion if it were included within the body of the document. Short extracts from major programs may be included to illustrate points but full program listings should only ever be placed within an appendix. Remember that the point of appendices is to make your report more readable. I don't expect to see apprentices in any Project Proposals.

Subjectively, I would hope not to see any in the Project Report but sometimes they're necessary.

Project Report Structure - Caveat 1

If your project is more research (and less software/development) focused then it's possible that having System Requirements makes less sense

It's often the case that research focused and social / analytical study projects will have a Methodology section, where you lay out the process by which you will meet the aims you've laid out in the Introduction

The structure for these types of projects would be more like Introduction -> Research-> LSEPIs -> Methodology -> Step 1 -> Step 2 -> […] -> Step N -> Project Management -> Evaluation -> Conclusion -> References

Project Report Structure - Caveat 2

If your project is more software/development focused then your Research section might focus more on existing system rather than research papers

This doesn't absolve you of the responsibility to understand the state-of-the-art or use research papers but it's more permissible not to have conference and journal papers dominating your list of references

Considering existing systems is appropriate the Research section

Project Report Structure - Caveat 3

It's normal and expected for your the aims/requirements/focus of your project to change

Your report can document the final aims/requirements/focus of your project, even if these were what you had at the outset of the project

It's still good to acknowledge whether these have evolved since the outset of the project

So, How Do I Know If My Project Report Structure Works?

There is no single, perfect way to write-up a final year project

There are many possible projects structures that could work for your project

Always speak to your Supervisor about what they're expecting!

Project Report - Frequently Asked Questions

Project Report - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the suggested word count for the submission?

40-credit projects: 8,000 words.

60-credit projects: 10,000 words.

What happens if I go substantially under or over the suggested word count?

All reports will be evaluated against the same expectations. If you go under but achieve the same level as a submission at the suggested word count, that's no problem but it's can be hard to achieve in some cases. If you go over but achieve the same level as a submission at the suggested word count, you will likely do less well. In short, write high-quality content rather than aiming for a number.

Project Report - Frequently Asked Questions

I'm looking to bolster my Research chapter. Where can I find reputable scientific papers?

I would suggest IEEE Xplore (ieeexplore.ieee.org), ACM Digital Library (dl.acm.org) or Google Scholar (scholar.google.com).

Are these materials from these sessions available?

Yes! The materials will be updated to include your questions.