Final Year Individual Project Report Writing

1 Introduction

The final year project involves the writing a report which carries the bulk of marks. The merit of your project will not be recognised if the report is bad. A good, critical report can show a project to its best advantage.

2 Report Structure

- Title page: title, author, course, supervisor, date.

- Originality avowal.

- Abstract: a half-a-page summary.

- Acknowledgement: people to thank.

- Contents: to sub-section level.

- List of figures and tables (optional)

- Chapters: introduction, ..., body, conclusion.

- Bibliography: references in a proper format.

- Appendices: labelled A,B etc to give details such as design diagrams, user manual, program listings.

A top-down approach in writing the report is recommended:

- Chapter Heading

- Section Heading

- Subsection Heading

- Paragraphs within subsections.

  Of course, flexibility in order of writing is allowed.

3 Style

The style should be *clear* but *formal.*

- Avoid usage of "I" as much as possible.

- Keep sentences as *short* as possible.

- Avoid abbreviations and slang. If you do use abbreviations make sure you explain what they mean first.

- Use *simple* words, do not use esoteric or arcane terminology.

- Do not use contractions such as don't, it's, isn't ...

- It is a report not a narrative (do not write "I did this, then I did that then this happened").

4 Figures and Tables

Diagrams and tables are very useful to help explain some things and to present results. All figures and tables should have:

- A number of the form 'chapter.figure'.
  For instance, 'Figure 3.4' is the fourth figure of chapter three.

- A caption. For instance 'Figure 3.4: Architecture of the System'.

5 Use of Resources

It is always important to say what sources have been used. References are used to identify a context, to justify your points, to provide background, etc. Give the source of any quotations, diagrams etc that you use. Never use someone else's work without citing it. You should give full details of every source cited and used in the project.

Each citation should consist of the following:

- All authors and initials.

- Date of publication.

- Journal/Collection (for papers).

- Publisher and place of publication (for books).

- URL for web pages and date accessed.

- Page numbers (for papers)

The department of Informatics suggests students consult the University of Birmingham Referencing Style Guide for Computer Science: `http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~pxc/refs/`. You are free to use either the Harvard (author-date) or Vancouver (numeric) style. As stated in the University of Birmingham guide consistency is most important.

6 Spelling and Grammar

- Always use a spell checker.

- Do not run sentences together. For instance, not "The program was a success, it did everything the user wanted." Use a semi-colon, or start a new sentence. For instance, "The program was a success; it did everything the user wanted.".

- Sentences have verbs in them. For instance, not "There are two kinds of input device. Keyboard and mouse." It should be either one sentence "There are two kinds of input device, namely, keyboard and mouse", or put a verb in the second sentence: "There are two kinds of input device. They are keyboard and mouse.".

References

[1] Dawson. Christian W. Projects in Computing and Information Systems: A Student's Guide. Addison-Wesley, 2005.

[2] Creme, P. and Lea, M.R. Writing at University: A Guide for Students. Open University Press. Buckingham, 1997.