Report writing in the Social Sciences
How the Learning Centre can help you
What we can do for you

- Central workshops
- Individual appointments
- Online resources - e.g. *The Write Site, WRISE*
- Support programs within specific courses
Examples of workshops

Academic Writing

- Essay Writing
- Paraphrasing and Summarising
- Writing in an Academic Style
- Clearer Writing
- Functional Grammar for Academic Writing

Workshops coming soon...

March – April Program
12th March – 20th April

Online enrolment from: Monday 5th March
Contacting the Learning Centre

Level 7, Education Building
Manning Road

Web: www.sydney.edu.au/lc
Phone: 9351 3853
Fax: 9351 4865
In this session, you will learn:

• The features of a report (in social sciences)
• Differences between a report and an essay
• How to structure a report
• Appropriate writing style for a report
• Steps in how to write a report
1. What is a report?
A report is...

• a piece of factual writing
• organises information under headings
• a workplace activity.
Types of reports

- Descriptive
- Explanatory
- Persuasive

Many reports are a combination of these three.
Types of reports

**Descriptive**
- what is
- presents facts and information in a logical way
- no argument or thesis
- Market share and sales figures for 2011

**Explanatory**
- how or why something happens/happened
- cause and effect
- implications
- Reasons for market share and sales figures for 2011

**Persuasive**
- factual information is the basis of evaluation or interpretation
- develops a thesis or argument
- takes a position or recommends
- Recommendations for how to improve market share
ACTIVITY - What kinds of reports are these?

1. Theories of youth cultures and subcultures
2. Recommendations for improvements in customer service
3. Reasons for expansion of Trans National Corporations into global markets
4. The strengths and limitations of evidence-based coaching.
ACTIVITY - What kinds of reports are these?

1. Theories of youth cultures and subcultures **DESCRIPTIVE**
2. Recommendations for improvements in customer service **PERSUASIVE**
3. Reasons for expansion of Trans National Corporations into global markets **EXPLANATORY**
4. The strengths and limitations of evidence-based coaching. **DESCRIPTIVE** (PERSUASIVE if a position is taken)
2. Differences between a report and an essay
ACTIVITY – What are the main differences between a report and an essay?
ACTIVITY – What are the main differences between a report and an essay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses headings and subheadings</th>
<th>General Essay</th>
<th>Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Centre ©
ACTIVITY – What are the main differences between a report and an essay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Essay</th>
<th>Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses headings and subheadings</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses full sentences</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses concise paragraphs and may include dot points</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses graphics – tables, graphs, summaries</td>
<td>(✓)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has an abstract or executive summary</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has references and a bibliography</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is often followed by recommendations</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often has appendices</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written for a specific audience (client, workplace scenario)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written for an academic audience (marker)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. How to structure a report
How to structure a report...

...however your lecturer tells you to!

There is not ONE PERFECT report format. Make sure you know exactly what is expected... ask if you want to clarify.
# Standard report elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Element (* means optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front matter</td>
<td>Letter of transmittal *</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title page</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of contents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>List of abbreviations / glossary *</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract or executive summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Introduction <em>(with specific headings)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body <em>(with specific headings)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion and recommendations <em>(with specific headings)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End matter</td>
<td>References / Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Element</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion and</td>
<td>(with specific headings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>End matter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY – City of Melbourne report on hospitality industry – cafes, restaurants, bars
Read the excerpts on your handout. In which sections / elements of a report do they belong?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 The actions undertaken in 2008-2009 were:  
  • prepare an economic profile report  
  • support the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and help position Melbourne as the food and wine capital of Australia                                                                                                                                           |         |
| 2 **Growth**  
While the growth rate of businesses in the cafes and restaurants section Victoria-wide has been at 3 per cent per annum during the period 2004-2007, the growth rate for the City of Melbourne has been more than 6 per cent.                                                                                           |         |
| 3 In response to the findings identified within this report, the City of Melbourne will create an action plan and identify activities to be carried out over the next three years, in line with Enterprise Melbourne and Council Plan.                                                                                      |         |
Read the excerpts on your handout. In which sections / elements of a report do they belong?

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</thead>
</table>
| 1 The actions undertaken in 2008-2009 were:  
• prepare an economic profile report  
• support the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and help position Melbourne as the food and wine capital of Australia                                                                                                               | INTRO      |
| 2 Growth  
While the growth rate of businesses in the cafes and restaurants section Victoria-wide has been at 3 per cent per annum during the period 2004-2007, the growth rate for the City of Melbourne has been more than 6 per cent.                                                                                           | BODY       |
| 3 In response to the findings identified within this report, the City of Melbourne will create an action plan and identify activities to be carried out over the next three years, in line with Enterprise Melbourne and Council Plan.                                                                                     | CONCL / RECO |
Read the excerpts on your handout. In which sections / elements of a report do they belong?

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<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **4**  | Entry and exits and survival  
However, when the survival rates of new businesses in the accommodation, cafes and restaurants category were compared to like-sized businesses in other industries in Victoria, the figures indicated that there was relatively low success level for the category. |  |
| **5**  | Hospitality is an important contributor to the city’s gross economic output and is a significant partner in the economic growth and sustainability of the city and the state. |  |
| **6**  | In 2009-10 we will deliver an “operator Toolkit” for hospitality businesses. The toolkit will address operator issues and provide an industry induction for new entrants, as well as information for prospective operators seeking to viability-test business models prior to launch. The toolkit will provide operators with pathways to become compliant with regulatory minimums, attain education and business skills. |  |
**ACTIVITY – City of Melbourne report on hospitality industry**

Read the excerpts on your handout. In which sections / elements of a report do they belong?

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</table>
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| **5** Hospitality is an important contributor to the city’s gross economic output and is a significant partner in the economic growth and sustainability of the city and the state. | INTRO / ABSTRACT |
| **6** In 2009-10 we will deliver an “operator Toolkit” for hospitality businesses. The toolkit will address operator issues and provide an industry induction for new entrants, as well as information for prospective operators seeking to viability-test business models prior to launch. The toolkit will provide operators with pathways to become compliant with regulatory minimums, attain education and business skills. | CONCL / RECO     |
There are always choices in structure and you choose!

**Country report**  
e.g. Viability of exporting x to Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Country report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Economic stability and growth</td>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Market potential</td>
<td>Summary Assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Geography</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Political stability</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Political climate</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Corruption</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Social</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Culture</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Language</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
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<tr>
<th>Technological</th>
<th>Technological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Protection of Intellectual Property</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation**

**References**  
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4. Appropriate writing style for a report
academic writing style

1. formal
   - “written” not spoken language
   - e.g. no contractions “can’t”

2. technical
   - specialised, subject-specific vocabulary
   - (explain key terms)

3. objective
   - support all statements with evidence and examples
   - use references

4. impersonal
   - do not use “I”, use passive voice

5. abstract
   - focus on issues, concepts, themes
1. Have a hierarchy of headings

Main heading

sub heading

other lower order headings

2. Use plenty of white space

3. Use tables and figures (graphs, illustrations, maps etc.) for clarification. Label them clearly and cite the source.

4. Number each page
A. Structure your report so the ideas flow logically

1. Use logical stages in each section:
   • strengths – weaknesses
   • opportunities – threats
   • risks – opportunities
   • pros - cons
   • factors
   • reasons
   • causes and effects

2. Make your structure clear by using headings and topic sentences to preview the main points.

3. Plan the report so the ideas flow logically.
1. Use a credible source to back up EVERY statement:
   • academic journals and books
   • recent and relevant
   • reputable sources of data (World Bank, Australian Bureau of Statistics)

2. Acknowledge differences, discrepancies, lack of information.
2. Use evidence

statements must be supported by evidence and discussion

The improved ability to do business in India has arisen due to the Indian government’s deregulation policy with economic and political reforms. The corporate tax rate was lowered from 65% to 55% which has encouraged foreign investment (Garud & Purohit 2007). The Joint Venture Protection Law, protecting joint venture partners has also promoted increased investment in India (India Country Review 2007).
5. Steps for how to write a report
Follow these steps

1. understand the task
2. research and evaluate
3. plan
4. draft the middle
5. write recommendations
6. write abstract or executive summary
7. format and edit
1. understand the task

- what is in the lecturer’s head?
- what is the purpose of your report?
- is your report descriptive, explanatory or persuasive… or all of them?
- clearly define the purpose and scope
2. research and evaluate

- read
- collect information (facts, stats, evidence)
- sift and evaluate – what is most important and significant?
3. plan

- concept map – all the issues on one page
- evaluate and prioritise
- determine the issues (opportunities, risks, problems, solutions, causes, effects, implications)
macro to micro planning

report as a whole

each section

each paragraph

each sentence
4. draft the middle

- write the middle section
- don’t start until you have a plan
- use headings and subheadings
- keep to your word budget
suggested paragraph planner

P  point (topic sentence)
E  elaborate, explain
E  evidence, examples
L  link to the question/issue/problem
5. write your recommendations

- create a small number of recommendations (3 - 5)
- Make sure your middle section has evidence / data to support your recommendations
6. write the abstract or executive summary

- if required
- one sentence from each section
- background / main issues / recommendation and summary of evidence
7. edit and format

Editing strategies
• read aloud
• print and read
• use a ruler under each line
• sleep on it
• ask a friend to read it

Format
• headings and fonts consistent
• spell check
• line spacing 1.5 or 2
• page numbers
• title page
• references
Report on viability of exporting Australian solar panels to Brazil.
Geography
Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of territory, covering over 8.5 million square kilometres. Almost 80% of its land lies between the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn. Over the course of a year, sunlight supplies an average 5 kilowatt hours of solar energy per square metre each day. Therefore, Brazil’s natural climate and positioning help make it one of the world’s leading countries in terms of potential solar energy reserves (INPE 2008).

However, its geographical distance from Australia has implications for transportation costs associated with exporting to Brazil. Specifically, the geographical distance of Brazil to Australia is 13,600km from both the East and West coasts of Australia. This is a significant obstacle to reaping the full benefits Brazil has to offer due to the fact that transportation costs associated with transferring panes from Australia to Brazil will be substantial.
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References


› Student writing samples used with student permission.