

Guidelines on Progress Report

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1. The Progress Report: Overview

The progress report should be project-centered, not syllabus- or assignment-centered. In other words, the progress report is a concise outline of your team findings and decisions. It is designed to give your supervisor(s) a complete overview of your project work in as efficient a fashion as possible. This means that the progress report itself will be relatively short (say, not more than five A4 pages).



The progress report may cover months of work and introduce some pages of appendices. Only the most significant findings and decisions should be included in the progress report. Design/Research work that informed the team's decisions but is not central to the project status or development should be included as an appendix.

Space in the progress report is allotted according to the relevance of each point to the design/research work and the progress of the project — not according to how much time you spent on it. So you may find that you spent twenty hours on background research that yielded only one relevant finding (it happens). Only that one finding will be included in the progress report. A digest of your research may, however, be included as an appendix.

Your progress report should use figures, tables, sketches, photos, graphs, charts, etc. as appropriate to illustrate its claims. All should be of high quality and reflect the professional nature of the document. Remember to:

- Provide numbers and titles for your figures, tables, etc.
- Provide a key for your graphs and charts.
- Provide dimensions for your graphics.
- Cite sources for your data and illustrations. For photos, you may give a photo credit.
- Refer to the figure in the text of the progress report.

Finally, it is to your benefit to make your progress reports as complete and polished as possible, since much of the material you develop for the progress reports can be used (with a few changes) in your team's final proposal or report.

2. Structure of the Report

Most progress reports include the following elements or sections:

(a) Introduction

The introduction should be short — roughly 4-5 sentences. It gives your reader four pieces of information: 1) The project / time period the report covers; 2) Where the design (or the preliminary design work) stands now; 3) What your team has planned to move the project forward; and 4) What the report will discuss overall (including any possible obstacles to future progress). That's it—no more, no less. Do not provide excessive detail about the sources of your research or your findings. Do not reference appendices in the introduction. Do remember to give some indication of how you plan to move forward with your project.

(b) Design Status / Research and Key Findings / Next Steps

These sections of your report should be broken into distinct blocks of information introduced by individual boldfaced headings and sub-headings. Do NOT simply use the generic headings. Instead, customize your headings so that they immediately orient the reader to the kind of information that he/she may expect to find in the section or sub-section. For example, if your team is in the final stages of designing an engineering system, your full heading for the design status section might read “Design Status: XXX Engineering System.”

- i) Design Status: This section tells your supervisors just how far your team has gotten in the design process and includes succinct explanations of how you’ve gotten there. The section may include the reasoning behind your selection of preliminary design directions, how you may interpret your client’s problem/requests, the key features or benefits of your proposed design solution(s), how you plan to meet user requirements, design questions that have yet to be answered and obstacles your team has encountered or anticipates.
- ii) Research and Key Findings: Note that this section includes only the key findings — the research that will actually drive your design decisions — in addition to a brief summary of your research methods. You should note where you found your information in a brief sentence or list of bullet points that directs your reader to relevant appendices. Generally, however, it is more effective to organize this section according to the type of information you found rather than according to your source.
- iii) Next Steps: This is the last section of the body of the progress report. This section is essential to your report—it gives your supervisor(s) an idea of how you plan to move forward on your project so that they may make suggestions, approve requests, or simply ask for clarification. Each step listed should include a tentative time frame for the step’s completion.

(c) References

Here you should list the sources (in accord with a standard citation style) that you or your team actually used to help your thinking about the design. You may include sources that prompted design ideas that were eventually discarded but do not list sources that turned out to be wholly irrelevant. It is generally a good idea to annotate your list of references, noting sources that were especially valuable or may need to be handled with care.

(d) Appendices

Appendices are included in order to facilitate a better understanding. Sometimes during a team meeting a question will arise that requires more detail than is available in the body of the report. The appendices are included to provide backup for assertions made in the progress report itself. Every appendix should be referenced at some appropriate point in the body of the progress report. That way when a question arises, everybody in the meeting knows where to look for the answers.

Useful Web Links

How to Write a Progress Report <https://www.examples.com/business/write-a-progress-report.html>

How to Write a Progress Report <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Progress-Report>

Online Technical Writing: Progress Reports <https://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/english/sections/linguist/independent/kursmaterialien/TechComm/achtml/progprep.html>

Writing a Progress Report

<https://www8.sunydutchess.edu/faculty/akins/documents/WritingaProgressReport.pdf>