Workshop on Report Writing Skills

BEng-BSE Degree Programme
http://ibse.hk/BEng-BSE.htm

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1. Introduction

- Objectives:
  - To highlight the important skills for FYP report writing
  - To explain the strategy for structuring & organising the report
  - To enable students to develop & write effective FYP reports
  - Provide students with some guidance and encouragement at the writing stage
1. Introduction

- Key elements of report writing:
  - Preparation → Structure → Writing → Presenting
- The purpose of a report is to inform or communicate important information effectively to the reader
  - It’s not just the writing part; it’s planning and organizing the material so that it makes sense to the reader
- The report CONTENT is the key
Insightful reports that bring the findings to life
1. Introduction

- Different types of reports:
  - Research report (for FYP2 Applied Research Project)
  - Design report (for FYP3 Detailed Design)
- Draft report: seek guidance from supervisor
  - A working version of the final report
  - Should be sent to your supervisor for comments
  - Allow sufficient time for your supervisor
2. Features of good reports

- What makes a good/bad report?
  - Badly structured
  - Inappropriate writing style
  - Incorrect or inadequate referencing
  - Doesn’t answer the brief
  - Too much/too little/irrelevant material
  - Expression not clear
  - Doesn’t relate results to purpose
  - Unnecessary use of jargon
2. Features of good reports

- How are reports read?
  - Thinking about the reader & his/her expectation
  - Research on how managers read reports discovered that they were most likely to read (in order): the abstract or summary; then the introduction; then the conclusions; then the findings; then the appendices
  - You may think abstract or introduction is less important but they are actually often the places a reader gets their first impressions
2. Features of good reports

- Assessment criteria for Research Report (for FYP2 Applied Research Project)
  - Understanding of research purpose & research question(s)
  - Sound argument & logical approach
  - Report organisation & clarity
  - Innovation & creativity (e.g. original ideas)
2. Features of good reports

- Assessment criteria for **Design Report** (for FYP3 Detailed Design)
  - Effective design for BSE systems
  - Report organisation & clarity
  - Drawing skills (schematics, layouts, details)
  - Innovation & creativity (e.g. new design concepts)
  - Teamwork (collaboration & coordination)
2. Features of good reports

- Features of good report writing:
  - It has a clear thoughts
  - It is complete & self-explanatory
  - It is comprehensive but compact
  - It is accurate in all aspects
  - It has suitable format for readers

- Clarity – Precise – Accuracy – Simplicity – Meaningful
3. Structuring your report

- Report structure:
  - Chapters
  - Sections
  - Sub-sections

- Layout:
  - Numbering
  - Figures & tables
  - Headings & styles
An example of report title page & report structure

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS AND
DESIGN REPORT

FOR
Residential Building
of
NIR KUMARI RAI

PREPARED BY: Enginagar Construction Pvt. Ltd.

July 14, 2017

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3. Structuring your report

- Typical research report structure:
  - Title page
  - [Contents] (*counted but not listed*)
  - Abstract/Executive Summary
  - 1. Introduction
  - 2. Literature Review
  - 3. Methodology/Research Methods
  - 4. Results/Findings
  - 5. Discussions & Recommendations
  - 6. Conclusions
  - References
  - Appendices
3. Structuring your report

• Front matters: (In Roman page numbers, i, ii, iii)
  • Abstract/Executive Summary
  • Acknowledgements
  • Declaration (a signed statement of originality)
  • List of figures
  • List of tables
  • List of abbreviations

• End matters:
  • References
  • Appendices
3. Structuring your report

- **Design report:**
  - May contain much details with technical drawings, calculations & technical information
    - Better to put them in appendices and provide good listing, numbering & indexing
  - The exact report structure will depend on the particular nature of your project
    - For example, one Chapter for each major BSE systems
    - Organised in a systematic & logical way
4. Writing your report

• Good writing style:
  • How to communicate your knowledge
  • Write to express, not to impress
  • Use short sentences, avoid over-complexity

• Design report:
  • Graphical & technical design information are most important (e.g. drawings & calculations)
  • Should consider the effect when read on the pages (e.g. drawing scale, resolution, texts, details)
4. Writing your report

• Writing academically:
  • Be objective
  • Be accurate
  • Be direct
  • Be critical
  • Be appropriate

• Writing critically:
  • The student who gives only the facts, with no assessment or interpretation, gets poor marks
Academic Style for Writing

**NO** Idiomatic / colloquial (slang)
- Kids / boss / gonna / stuff

**NO** Phrasal verbs
- Go up / look up

**NO** Personal Pronouns
- I, we, In my opinion (limit use)

**NO** Contractions
- it’ll = it will / It’s = it is

**NO** Questions
- So why did the project fail?

**NO** Personal adverbs
- Surprisingly / fortunately

**NO** Number / bullet points

**NO** Vague language
- And so on... / etc...

**NO** Repetition
- Constant repeating same words

**YES** Passive structures
- We analysed the data / The data was analysed

**YES** — Academic Vocabulary
- See A.W.L.

**YES** — Referencing systems

**YES** Complex Grammar structures
- Nominalisation / noun structures

**NO** Basic language
- Like — for example
- Thing — factor
- Lots of — significant amount
- Little / big — large
- Get — obtain
- Hard — difficult
- Good / bad — positive / negative
- Amazing / wonderful — important

**YES** Caution / hedging — tentative language
- Possibly / seems / appears / could / may

**YES** Accurate vocabulary
- Difference between law / rule

**YES** Precise facts / figures
- A few years ago / in 2014
4. Writing your report

- Suggested order for writing:
  - Methodology & data/results
  - Introduction & literature survey
  - Discussion
  - Conclusions & recommendations
  - Abstract/Executive summary
4. Writing your report

- Finishing touches:
  - Referencing (avoid plagiarism)
  - Proof reading (e.g. punctuation, grammar, citations)
  - Title pages, contents, list of figures/tables

- Further guidance:
  - How to Write Your Thesis
5. Practical exercise

- Create a basic outline of your FYP2 ARP Research Report (table of contents)
- Exchange with another student & comment on the report structure
- Find out what issue(s) you need to improve on the report outline
- Send the report outline to your supervisor for comments & advice
5. Practical exercise

- Consider the contents & structure of the Final Design Report of FYP3 Detailed Design
  - May use the previous Design Report as reference
  - Should focus on new or extended information & avoid too much duplication
  - Organise the graphical & technical design information in the appendices
  - Should show team working & coordination results
Information overload is killing our ability to make decision

Think carefully when you plan & write the reports