MTTM-403

SUBJECT: BUSINESS PRESENTATION SKILLS

UNIT 2

TOPIC: REPORTS

Reports are documents designed to record and convey information to the reader. Reports are part of any business or organization; from credit reports to police reports, they serve to document specific information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose or function, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, a sales report, or even a book report. Reports are often analytical, or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they simply "report the facts" with no analysis at all, but still need to communicate the information in a clear and concise format. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends.A sales report, for example, is not designed to make an individual sale. It is, however, supposed to report sales to date, and may forecast future sales based on previous trends.

Types of Reports

Reports come in all sizes, but are typically longer than a page and somewhat shorter than a book. The type of report depends on its function. The function of the report is its essential purpose, often indicated in the thesis or purpose statement. The function will also influence the types of visual content or visual aids, representing words, numbers, and their relationships to the central purpose in graphic, representational ways that are easy for the reader to understand. The function may also contribute to parameters like report length (page or word count) or word choice and readability.

Type	Function
1. Laboratory Report	Communicate the procedures and results of laboratory activities
2. Research Report	Study problems scientifically by developing hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing data, and indicating findings or conclusions
3. Field Study Report	Describe one-time events, such as trips, conferences, seminars, as well as reports from branch offices, industrial and manufacturing plants
4. Progress Report	Monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, or related business process
5. Technical Report	Communication process and product from a technical perspective
6. Financial Report	Communication status and trends from a finance perspective
7. Case Study	Represent, analyze, and present lessons learned from a specific case or example
8. Needs Assessment Report	Assess the need for a service or product
9. Comparative Advantage Report	Discuss competing products or services with an analysis of relative advantages and disadvantages
10. Feasibility Study	Analyze problems and predict whether current solutions or alternatives will be practical, advisable, or produced the desired outcome(s)
11. Instruction Manuals	Communicate step-by-step instructions on the use of a product or service
12. Compliance Report	Document and indicate the extent to which a product or service is within established compliance parameters or standards
13. Cost-Benefit Analysis Report	Communicate costs and benefits of products or services.
14. Decision Report	Make recommendations to management and become tools to solve problems and make decisions
15. Benchmark Report	Establish criteria and evaluate alternatives by measuring against the establish benchmark criteria
16. Examination Report	Report or record data obtained from an examination of an item or conditions, including accidents and natural disasters
17. Physical Description report	Describe the physical characteristics of a machine, a device, or object
18. Literature Review	Present summaries of the information available on a given subject

Seven Steps to Create Effective Project Reports

1. Decide the Objective: Take some time to think about the purpose of the report. Do you need to describe, explain, recommend or persuade? Having a clear purpose from the outset ensures that you stay focused, which makes it easier to engage your reader.

2. Understand Your Audience: Writing a formal annual report for your stakeholders is very different to a financial review. Tailor your language, use of data and

supporting graphics to the audience. It is also useful to consider the personal communication styleof the reader, for example, how do they write emails or structure documents? Reflect their preferences where possible. You may need to develop a more formal or informal tone to your own natural style. Adapting this technique will build rapport and make the reader more receptive to your ideas

3. Report Format and Type: Before you start, check the report format and type. Do you need to submit a written report or deliver a presentation? Do you need to craft a formal, informal, financial, annual, technical, fact-finding or problem-solving report?

4. Gather the Facts and Data: Including engaging facts and data will solidify your argument. Start with your collaborative project site and work out as needed. Remember to cite sources such as articles, case studies, and interviews

5. Structure the Report: A report typically has four elements:

- **Executive Summary**. Your report will begin with the summary, which is written once the report is finished. As the first item the reader encounters, this is the most important section of the document. They will likely use the summary to decide how much of the report they need to read so make it count!

- **Introduction:** Provide a context for the report and outline the structure of the contents. Identify the scope of the report and any particular methodologies used

- **Body:** It's now time to put your writing skills to work! This is the longest section of the report and should present background details, analysis, discussions, and recommendations for consideration. Draw upon data and supporting graphics to support your position

- **Conclusion:** Bring together the various elements of the report in a clear and concise manner. Identify next steps and any actions that your reader needs to take.

6. Readability: Spend some time making the report accessible and enjoyable to read. If working in Word, the Navigation pane is a great way to help your reader work through the document. Use formatting, visuals, and lists to break up long sections of text

7. Edit: The first draft of the report is rarely perfect so you will need to edit and revise the content. If possible, set the document aside for a few days before reviewing or ask a colleague to review.

Contents of a Project Report

*Title page -*This has the standard format.

Abstract - The abstract is a very brief summary of the dissertation's contents. It should be about half a page long. Somebody unfamiliar with your project should have a good idea of what it is about having read the abstract alone and will know whether it will be of interest to them.

*Acknowledgements -*It is usual to thank those individuals who have provided particularly useful assistance, technical or otherwise, during your project.

*Contents page -*This should list the main chapters and (sub)sections of your dissertation. Choose self-explanatory chapter and section titles and use double spacing for clarity. If possible you should include page numbers indicating where each chapter/section begins. Try

to avoid too many levels of subheading. Try if possible to stick to sections and subsections; sub-subsections are usually avoidable.

Introduction -This is one of the most important components of the dissertation. It should begin with a clear statement of what the project is about so that the nature and scope of the project can be understood by the reader. It should summarise everything you set out to achieve, provide a clear summary of the project's background and relevance to other work and give pointers to the remaining sections of the dissertation which contain the bulk of the technical material.

Background -The background section of the report should set the project into context by relating it to existing published work which you read at the start of the project when your approach and methods were being considered. There are usually many ways of approaching a given problem, and you shouldn't just pick one at random. Describe and evaluate as many alternative approaches as possible. The background section is often included as part of the introduction but can be a separate chapter if the project involved an extensive amount of research. The published work may be in the form of research papers, articles, text books, technical manuals, or even existing software or hardware of which you have had hands-on experience. Don't be afraid to acknowledge the sources of your inspiration; you are expected to have seen and thought about other people's ideas; your contribution will be putting them into practice in some other context. However, avoid plagiarism: if you take another person's work as your own and do not cite your sources of information/inspiration you are being dishonest; in other words you are *cheating*. When referring to other pieces of work, cite the sources at the point they are referred to or used, rather than just listing them at the end.

Body of report- The central part of the report usually consists of three of four chapters detailing the technical work undertaken during the project. The structure of these chapters is highly project dependent. Usually they reflect the chronological development of the project, e.g. design, implementation, experimentation, optimisation, although this is not always the best approach. However you choose to structure this part of the report, you should make it clear how you arrived at your chosen approach in preference to the other alternatives documented in the background. For implementation projects you should describe and justify the design of your program at some high level, for example by using any of the design methods taught during the first and second term courses, and should document any interesting problems with, or features of, your implementation. Integration and testing are also important to describe. Your supervisor will advise you on the most suitable structure for these middle sections.

Conclusions and Future Work - All good projects conclude with an objective evaluation of the project's successes and failures and suggestions for future work which can take the project further. It is important to understand that there is no such thing as a perfect project. Even the very best pieces of work have their limitations and you are expected to provide a proper critical appraisal of what you have done. Your assessors are bound to spot the limitations of your work and you are expected to be able to do the same.

Bibliography - This consists of a list of all the books, articles, manuals etc. used in the project and referred to in the report. You should provide enough information to allow the reader to find the source. You should give the full title and author and should state where it is published, including full issue number and date, and page numbers where necessary. In the case of a text book you should quote the name of the publisher as well as the author(s).