COMP1205
Technical Writing and Plagiarism Tutorial
Dr. Su White

http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/15567/
We have had the theory...

Let's imagine the process 😊

Technical writing

Lectures 9-10, 26.10.2015
Elena Simperl

Professional Development (COMP1205)

Reproduction literacy & academic integrity

Lectures 5-6, 12.10.2015
Elena Simperl

Professional Development (COMP1205)

http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/15350/

http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/15127/
What do you want to learn today?

Think about how you write:
- What can you already do well which will be useful?
- Where are your weaknesses?

Based on this reflection

write down three things you would like to get out of the session today
You need to learn how to...

- Organise writing clearly and logically
- Handle evidence appropriately in writing to present a structured and logical argument
- Explain concepts in formal context
- Structure your work for correctly for the appropriate audience
- Understand strategies for revision at the document, paragraph and sentence levels
- Understand grammatical and stylistic usage
- Be able to edit and refine your own written work
Sum wonderful peeples gt evrytng write 1st thyme

- This information/class is not for you!!
- But you may be able to help your friends and colleagues
- You may learn from helping them

Btw… can you write down the correct version of my heading?

NB spell checkers do not correct all mistakes
Think about the process and purpose of writing

Two minutes:
What is the purpose of
• writing the technical report
  ◦ in this module
• writing reports
  ◦ as part of your degree
• writing
  ◦ in a professional context

Includes:
• Learning how to write (and practicing)
• Recording a process for ‘reproduction’
• Demonstrating knowledge, skills and understanding
• Communicating scientific or technical findings/discoveries/insights

Dr Su White saw@ecs.soton.ac.uk
COMPI205 http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/15567/
Look at the technical report spec’

COMP1205 Technical Report - specification

Rationale
Reports are one of the most common and important technical documents in the workplace. Reports provide information and recommendations in order to help organizations solve problems or achieve goals. A well-designed and written technical report is informative and persuasive, often to multiple audiences.

Assignment
You will each be individually allocated a specific scenario from the set below on which to write a 2002 word technical report.

Read the brief carefully to understand the extent of the brief. Make a note of all the requirements. Before you hand in your work, double check you have addressed all the requirements:
- brief; formatting; academic integrity; references/citations.

Topics:
Anonymity, Privacy and Security
1. Your boss has been looking at guidance from the British Standards Institute which provides guidance on good practice to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act. As a consequence they have become interested in security issues, particularly in relation to anonymity of communications on the internet. They have asked you to find out for them how you can achieve anonymity in communications on the internet. How would it be useful to the company? Could it be a way of securing more private communications, or could it be a device to which supports industrial espionage and other abuse of the company computing resources by dishonest employees? They ask...
Look at the mark scheme
The process – and pragmatics

Your first draft will never be good enough to hand in!

Always hand in before the deadline
Before Getting Started

- You wish to communicate “What you have found out”. If you didn’t find anything out : STOP!

- Usually technical reports are intended to communicate new knowledge
  “I had this hypothesis and I tested it like this; here are my results and this is what we learn from them”

- BUT as a student
  you are asked to write technical reports about things that you know that the person who reads it (the marker) will already know. Don’t worry – your marker is not your audience (see later) – and your task is still to express what *you* found out.
Use the process to learn about yourself

• How do you think and learn?

How can you refine what you do?:

• To work *smarter* not harder
Working collaboratively can be more fun/productive…

- But write your report individually
- Find your own words
- Select your quotes – and cite them accurately
Bear in mind existing guidance
What we know about plagiarism

- People who are rushed:
  - Take shortcuts
  - May feel panicked
  - May not make good decisions

- ...how to avoid it
  - Carve our enough time
  - Add a buffer for the unexpected
Think about using writing tools

Using Scrivener for Writing Scientific Papers

As an academic, I spend a lot of time writing. Switching to a Mac in 2008 was one of the best productivity hacks of my life. But there has always been this nagging problem: Microsoft Word. I hate Microsoft Word. Especially the Mac version.

Word has many flaws, but the most irritating is its amazing ability to hang or crash. It happens all the time, but especially when exchanging documents that have “track changes” enabled with colleagues on PCs. I still remember vividly one night when I was working on a paper that Word crashed more than 30 times. So infuriating.

Enter Scrivener

My frustration with Word drove me to experiment with many other word processors like Pages, OpenOffice, LibreOffice, and Google Docs. Although it wasn’t first on my list to try, I kept hearing rave reviews of a program called Scrivener from accomplished writers like Michael Hyatt and Jeff Eats. Scrivener isn’t a word processor. It’s a writing studio.
It helps me organise text
Some of the best student work I have seen was produced in scrivener

Whatever you do:
Use and select tools for functionality not because of dogma!
Advice includes

- Set aside time for research and writing
- Challenge common assumptions
- Overcome procrastination
- Eliminate distractions
- Use a timer
- Set SMART goals
- Chunk your project into small tasks
- Track your progress
- Make yourself accountable

SMART Goals

- **S**pecific: What do you want to achieve in your area of focus?
- **M**eaningful: Why is this goal important to you?
- **A**ction Oriented: What steps will you take to achieve it?
- **R**ealistic: How do you know that you can achieve this goal?
- **T**imely: By when do you want to achieve this goal?
Reports are not personal

One time, I thought I would write a mystery novel. In the novel, there would be a murder and all kinds of people would try to figure out who did it. At the end, you would find out that the narrator of the book did it.

Then I figured someone probably did that already and I remembered that I am an awful writer and I really hate mysteries.

With thanks to nataliedee.com
Structure of a Technical Report

- **[Title page]**
  - name, affiliation, date, contact details, etc.
- **[Declaration]**
  - who did this work?
- **[Acknowledgement]**
  - to those who have helped or influenced your work
- **[Contents]**
  - sections, sub sections and page numbers (probably not sub sub sections)
- **Abstract**
  - stand-alone summary of report
- **Introduction**
  - provides the motivation and context and outlines other related work
- **Main technical sections**
  - theory, experimental method, results, discussion
- **Conclusions**
  - and appropriate future work
- **References**
- **[Web References]**
- **[Bibliography]**
- **[Appendices]**
  - anything which would interfere with the continuity of the main report (typically detail)
Report function

- Abstract summarises the work presented
- Introduction (provides context)
- Itemise the key work(s)
- Identify where your contribution fits
- Present key ideas, describe methods
- Present Results
- Draw Conclusions

Remember Your report is not a detective novel!
The Abstract

- must be stand-alone
- must not contain citations
- is a concise summary – not a précis.

IS VERY IMPORTANT

Use four or five sentences.

1. What is the problem, and why is it a problem?
2. What is your idea for a suggested solution?
3. How did test your idea?
4. What results did you get?
5. Why is that useful?

It’s a good idea to write the abstract before you begin (even if you re-write it after you finish)
Tea drinkers report major differences in their satisfaction with cups of tea, even when they have been made from the same tea leaves. One possible cause of this variability is the temperature of the water at the time it is poured over the tea leaves.

This report describes an experiment in which one hundred tea drinkers were asked their views on teas made with water at different temperatures. The results demonstrate a significant preference for tea made with near boiling water.

The perceived quality of tea, particularly in the USA, would be much enhanced if caterers observed this convention.

- (5 sentences, 98 words)
Work and improve over time

- Have a plan
- Do good work
- Record your work
- Analyse the results
- Capture the whole process
- Meet your deadlines

Some aspects will apply equally to:
- Every written task

Use opportunities to refine your process

these are skills for life
Record an Audit Trail

References

- Provide an audit trail
- Acknowledge others’ work
- Are concise

Should be replicable

List references

- consistently,
- correctly,
- completely

They need to be:

complete and in a standard format

They need to contain:

- enough detail to locate the same source again

Do not include:

- ISBN
- Library call numbers
Work smarter not harder

One touch

- Write your bibliography as you go
- Always get full references
- Record how and when
- Collect to a standard format
Information needed

- Gather information before and during writing
- Begin to organise information as you obtain it
- Information from others: record full bibliographic details
- Information you generate: keep a complete logbook record
Keep track of your sources

With notes, copies of articles, useful diagrams, etc.,

NB

- Authors, complete name of work, editors if any, publisher, year/month of publication, volume no., page numbers
- URL plus any clues as to original paper source.
- If class notes, is there a printed textbook?
- If a self-contained paper, look for any and all clues to find the original citation (e.g. author’s publication list on Web page).

Avoid plagiarism