

## COMP1205 CW3 Technical report: abstract guidance and research process

Draft an abstract by carefully reading and understanding the topic brief which you have been given.

You can follow the suggested formula (at the end of this document) and adapt it to your own writing context

You can then use the abstract to keep you on track as you investigate the topic

Research and writing will be deeply intermixed, the notes below are designed to step you through the process

You are advised to read the notes to understand the process they describe, then work on your research and writing using the notes as a reference.

As you are planning and doing your writing you may also find it useful to refer to the notes on rapid review for a draft technical report

Investigation will be a multistage process, so will writing

- 1) Orientation – thinking about the brief which you have been given, making sure you understand the brief
  - a. Ways to check your initial understanding include:
    - Summarising the brief in note form
    - Creating a mind map
    - Writing a list of the sub topics you will investigate
    - Discussing your understanding, and your confusions with a friend

**Make a first draft of your abstract** – it will be sketchy. At this stage its purpose is to help any interim reviewers understand what you are setting out to do, and to keep you on track with your research.

**Decide on a title for your report** – keep it short and simple  
e.g. Green It: and investigation to xxxxx
- 2) Clarification/Investigation
  - a. Organisational planning
    - Check the assignment specification, look at the required template
    - Set up files in your computer and plan your time for the task
    - Decide on how you are going to record the process (be prepared to modify and learn)
    - You can use systems like pomodoro and pacemaker.press to help manage your time
  - b. Conduct preliminary searches online
    - General web searches
    - Searching slideshare, youtube, tedx
    - Reading wikipedia sites
  - c. Record a personal audit trail
    - Building a bookmark list, or noting your history with a tool like Evernote

- d. Build your draft
    - Revisiting and annotating your initial orientation notes
    - Re-reading the original topic brief to make sure you are moving towards addressing the brief
    - Revise your abstract** – you are beginning to understand what you are investigating
    - If you have ideas about organisation or arguments add them to your draft document
- 3) Generic academic searching
- a. Conduct more focussed searches online
    - Google Scholar using key words and phrases
    - Google scholar, checking citations used in wikipedia pages
    - ACM/IEEE Web of Science searches
  - b. Compare results from different searches
  - c. Practice constructive approaches to your literature searches
    - Following citation chains
    - Checking through long lists of recent publications
    - Searching for and investing authoritative grey literature sources
    - Building a set of references in your chosen reference manager
    - Evaluating the quality of your sources
  - d. Build good working habits
    - Making sure you practice 'one touch'
    - Use a time management technique like a pomodoro
    - Work regularly in small chunks with regular breaks
    - Discuss your progress with others, show them early drafts
  - e. Make your report a working project and a living document
    - Re-read your original topic brief, and your draft abstract
    - Revise your abstract**
    - Build notes and content
    - Sketch ideas and photograph them, put the pic into your draft doc
- 4) Sense making of the references you have found
- a. Reflect on the evidence which you are identifying
    - Do you have evidence to support your claims or assertions?
    - Can you summarise arguments into a table or diagram?
    - Are there a list of points which can be presented?
    - Are there two or three different perspectives which can be compared?

- 5) Building a structured draft
  - a. Populate the sections of the report
    - Write short notes in your own words when you are citing literature
    - Think about how you can represent the information
  - b. Check against the assessment criteria
  - c. Discuss with your fellow students
  - d. Use the technical report rapid review sheet
  
- 6) Reviewing - expect to review and revise a number of times
  - a. Focus on content, structure and argument
  - b. Layout, word length and spelling **has to be correct** but can be addressed at a later stage
  - c. Revise your draft at the very end to make it accurate and detailed
  - d. **Revise your abstract** at the very end to make it as accurate and informative as possible – and within the word limit!

<b>Guide</b>	<b>What this means</b>	<b>For example (early draft)</b>
<b>This is the way the world is</b>	Provide the reader with some general context. Scope and scale is good	NB: Remember you have to make your abstract relevant to your brief!  The popular press regularly report on incidents of breaches of privacy however there is much which an individual can do to educate themselves in ways in which to protect their personal data. In 20xx the ICO reported xxxx breaches at an estimated cost of xxxx
<b>This is what is wrong with the world</b>	A problem statement	This report sets out to investigate xxxx (whatever the problem is that has been set in your brief)
<b>Here is my 'idea'</b>	The methods and approaches to the investigation presented in this report	The report summarises the findings of a detailed review of good practice guidelines and existing legislation.
<b>Here is what I found and concluded</b>	The take away messages from the report	It presents as list of recommendations for good practice covering three key areas of....

Note, at a draft stage there will be things you don't yet know, or don't yet understand. Indicate that in your draft abstract.

These notes are designed to help you with your interim submission.

Read them in conjunction with the rapid review form and guidance <http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/17906/> .

Always refer to the assignment specification well before the hand in, to check you are doing the work which is expected.