These notes are designed to accompany the lecture on report writing. They contain a summary of the links provided in the slides and to related resources also available from EdShare http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/11547/

The aim of this two-hour lecture is to give you some insights into the skills which you will need to master which will help you with assignments which require report writing.

Effectively communicating the outcomes of research is an essential activity. During your masters degree you will be given various tasks which require you to write a report which gives a thorough account of a research activity which you have undertaken.

All students will benefit from spending time reading existing reports and academic papers which are concerned with their chosen academic specialism.

## Structure

The class falls into two parts – reflecting two aspects of the activity.

* Basics or technical writing – approaches and citations
* Deeper technical considerations

I suggest you re-read the slides used in the lecture. It may be helpful to do this with another student and to discuss what you understand from the guidance, and how you will apply this in your work.

## Summary FAQs

### What does this part of ELEC6021 cover?

* This section of ELEC6021 introduces you to report writing in a general sense.

### How will I learn about report writing from this part of the module?

* You will need to re-read the notes
* Discuss the points made in the lecture with your fellow students
* Identify specific areas of improvement which will be most important to you personally
* Practice what you have learnt in real assignments, refer to the notes to remind you what you need to do

### When will I use the things I learn about report writing?

* You can practice the advice and guidance from this lecture when you complete assignments over the two teaching semesters of the course.
* They will also be relevant to the work you do undertaking your Master’s dissertation.

## What Next?

* Refer back to the class slides: In EdShare http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/11547/, work through the rest of this handout.

## Further resources

The remainder of this handout contains general advice, links to external references and documents designed to help in the proof reading, reviewing and writing development of high quality written work.

|  |
| --- |
| Important Note  * You will only improve your writing and researching skills by practice. * Students who are technically and mathematically very able sometimes under-estimate the amount of time which is needed to write reports. * It is important to understand and remember that technical writing and academic writing is a method of recording the outcome of your laboratory experiments and other research. * If you are writing in a language which is not your native tongue, writing can be very time consuming; and you may find that writing is a very tiring activity. * You need to plan your time carefully and understand that your writing will improve with practice, especially if you are prepared to learn from your mistakes. |

## Additional Resources:

After the class you may find the following resources useful

## References/Webliography

### University of Southampton

There are various sources of additional information provided by different parts of the University.

**General University notes for academic skills topics include:**  
Although these resources were created a number of years ago, they are still relevant

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * reading academically | * writing effectively |
| * bibliographic software | * referencing work |
| * search strategies | * giving a talk. |

You can find links to the complete set of resources at http://www.academic-skills.soton.ac.uk You may find additional resources if you enrol on the academic skills module via Blackboard http://blackboard.soton.ac.uk/

**Academic Integrity**

Read the general guidance

* http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/integrity/index.htm

Work through the ECS academic integrity tutorial

* http://www.edshare.soton.ac.uk/7815/2/AIT.pdf

See the rules and regulations

* http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/academic-integrity-procedures.html

Be familiar with the academic integrity statement for students

* http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/academic-integrity-procedures.html

Understand the regulations as they are explained in the ECS student handbook

* http://www.fpse.soton.ac.uk/student\_handbook

**Information Skills (Library)**

Information skills:notes of citation formats

* http://www.southampton.ac.uk/library/infoskills/references/

General notes for ECS students

* http://www.southampton.ac.uk/library/subjects/ecs/

## English Language

Grammar: an introduction to traditional grammar (sections 1 and 2)

* http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/notes/grammar.htm

### English for Academic Purposes

Details of extra classes and a set of guides for you to download

* http://www.southampton.ac.uk/cls/english/support.html

**General External Resources on Writing**

**Spelling and Punctuation** (Glasgow University)

Guidelines on spelling and punctuation, with exercises (the Aries project)

* <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLL/STELLA/ARIES/>

**Learn Higher (report writing)** is a UK university project with very helpful exercises and guidance for students. This is a link to their notes and exercises to help in report writing  
http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/writing-for-university/report-writing/

**The University of Toronto** has a general writing centre, which is very informative  
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/  
One is specifically a guide to writing lab reports,   
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/lab-report

## Appendices Further Resources

Additional notes in this handout

1. Understanding University Mark Criteria
2. Coursework self review sheet
3. Self Mark Sheet – lab report specific
4. Information Source Evaluation Matrix
5. MSc Dissertation Mark Sheet

## Appendix A: Understanding Mark Criteria

University marked material is generally based around the following general set of criteria. When you are planning, developing or reviewing your work before handing it in, you are advised to try to make an objective review of the quality.

Each coursework will have its own specific mark scheme, so make sure that you pay attention to those requirements too.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Percentage** | **Interpretation** |
| **70%+** | * Work of exceptional quality * Shows clear understanding of subject matter and appreciation of issues * Well formulated, arguments sustained * Tables and diagrams where relevant * Relevant literature references * Marked evidence of creative thought and originality * high level of intellectual work |
| **60-69%** | * Work of unusual quality * Shows strong grasp of subject matter and appreciation of dominant issues, though not necessarily finer points * Arguments clearly developed * Relevant literature referenced * Evidence of creative thought * Solid intellectual work |
| **50-59%** | * Work of solid quality * Shows competent understanding of subject matter and appreciation of main issues, though possibly with some gaps and inadequacies * Arguments clearly developed and supported by references though possibly with minor red herrings and loose ends * Some evidence of creative thought * Well prepared and presented |
| **40-49%** | * Work ranges from a bare pass to a safe pass * Shows adequate understanding of subject matter, but lacks breadth and depth * Takes a simple factual approach and does not attempt to interpret the findings * Work generally has gaps in understanding, argument and references * At the lower end indicates a need for considerable additional effort to achieve improvement |
| **<40%** | * Unsatisfactory * Shows a lack of understanding of the topics * Arguments and references may be irrelevant or absent * Work may be incomplete |

## Appendix B Generic coursework review sheet

You are advised to use this self-mark sheet to help improve your writing and review your progress; you could also pair up with fellow students to go through this process.

* It will guide you through the process of checking the various different components of your coursework
* The components of the criteria are broken down into a number of distinct areas
* Before you hand in your work you are advised to review it from each perspective.
* Give yourself a grading of excellent, good , adequate, and inadequate.
* Revise your work until you are satisfied with your level of achievement.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Structure | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Structure |
| Relevant to topic |  |  |  |  | Little relevance |
| Topic covered in depth |  |  |  |  | Superficial treatment of topic |
| Argument | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Argument |
| Accurate presentation of evidence |  |  |  |  | Much evidence inaccurate or questionable |
| Logically developed argument |  |  |  |  | Writing rambles and lacks continuity |
| Originality | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Originality |
| Evidence of original and creative thought |  |  |  |  | Little evidence of originality |
| Style | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Style |
| Fluent piece of writing |  |  |  |  | Clumsily written |
| Succinct writing |  |  |  |  | Unnecessarily repetitive |
| Presentation | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Presentation |
| Legible and well set out work |  |  |  |  | Untidy and difficult to read |
| Reasonable length |  |  |  |  | Over/under length |
| Sources | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Sources |
| Sources adequately acknowledged |  |  |  |  | Some plagiarism |
| Correct citation of sources |  |  |  |  | Incorrect or incomplete referencing |
| Mechanics | Excellent | Good | Adequate | Inadequate | Mechanics |
| Sentences grammatical |  |  |  |  | Several ungrammatical sentences |
| Correct spelling and punctuation throughout |  |  |  |  | Much incorrect spelling and punctuation |
| Effective use of figures and tables |  |  |  |  | Figures and tables add little to argument |
| Correct and consistent use of units |  |  |  |  | Some units incorrect |

## Appendix C Report Self Review Sheet

As well as becoming familiar with the typical mark boundaries, you can improve your performance by analysing your work against self-mark sheets before you hand in.

You are advised to use this self-mark sheet either individually or paired up with fellow students to go through this process.

* It will guide you through the process of checking the various different components of your coursework
* The components of the criteria are broken down into a number of distinct areas
* Before you hand in your work you are advised to review it from each perspective.
* Give yourself a grading of either: excellent, good, adequate, and inadequate.
* Revise your work until you are satisfied with your level of achievement.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Abstract** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Abstract** |
| Tells you everything you need to know about the paper  Sets context  Identifies problem /challenge  One line conclusion |  |  |  |  | Too similar to conclusions  Contains discussion  Rambling  Too short  Not fit for purpose |
| **Introduction /Aims** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Introduction /Aims** |
| Engages the reader  Tells a story  Sets the context/scene |  |  |  |  | Appear irrelevant  Not “scientific” e.g. anecdotal, pseudo science, magazine article |
| **Literature** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Literature** |
| Referencing numbered  Demonstrates that you understand the relevance of your own work  Reinforce your argument  Convinces reader of relevance of work |  |  |  |  | May appear to be either  Superficial (hurried)  Irrelevant  Incomplete  Done after the work!! |
| **Methods** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Methods** |
| Sufficient to be able to replicate the experiment/work  Might demonstrate how you use a generic approach to analysis |  |  |  |  | Gaps  Badly phrased  Incomplete  Confused order |
| **Results** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Results** |
| Likely to include tables, graphs and figures  Tables labelled  Graphs have clear and reasonable axes which are labelled appropriately scaled |  |  |  |  | Incomplete data  Data presented in Inappropriate format  Tables are often the worst  Stuff in results section which should be in appendices |
| **Conclusions** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Conclusions** |
| Includes pointers to future work  Objective, addresses any errors which might have occurred.  Does not have to be positive |  |  |  |  | Muddled  Inconclusive  Unconvincing  Illogical  Wrong |

As well as these reviews which relate to each section of the report, there are some general criteria shown in the next table

**Further details which are important components of your report**

**Review each of these independently**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tables/Diagrams** | | | | | |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** |  |
| Labelled axes with units  Showing intended detail |  |  |  |  | Incomplete  Poorly labelled |
| **Appendices** | | | | | |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** |  |
| Included  Relevant  Clearly referenced  Clarifies the rest of the document. |  |  |  |  | Not included  Incomplete  Poorly referenced  No clear relation to rest of text |
| **Bibliography/references** | | | | | |
| **Own Work** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** | **Not your Own Work** |
| Experiments authentically recorded and presented |  |  |  |  | Copied  Cut and paste  Not original |
| **Overall review** | | | | | |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** |  |
| Readable |  |  |  |  | Readable |
| Spelling  /grammar |  |  |  |  | Spelling  /grammar |
| Structure |  |  |  |  | structure |
| Voice |  |  |  |  | Voice |
| **Meets the specification** | | | | | |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** |  |
| Layout meets spec |  |  |  |  | Layout does not match spec |
| Within page/word limit |  |  |  |  | Exceeds page/word limit |
| All required tasks addressed |  |  |  |  | All required tasks addressed |

## Finally

Of course you always need to read the specific marking criteria for the coursework for which you are writing the report or dissertation.

## Appendix D Information Source Evaluation Matrix

You can use this information sheet as a checklist when you identify materials which you reference. Rate your reference and add up the score. The best references yield the highest score.



## Appendix E MSc Marking Criteria

Your ultimate ambition as you work on your Masters degree will be to gain the best possible mark in your dissertation project. If you understand that the report will be used to provide the evidence of the work which you have undertaken.

Reports are written to provide a narrative of the work which has been undertaken. The better you can describe and analyse your work, the more likely you are to be able to maximise your potential achievement. The Mark scheme will help you set your objectives

