

ELEC602I Research Methods – Report Writing

Self Evaluation – where are you starting?

Report writing is an important component of the activities you will undertake as a part of your Masters studies.

You may learn better if you can know your relative strengths and weaknesses and think about where to prioritise your effort.

Improving your report writing will be integrated into your general development.

The objectives of this lecture are to help you understand 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

Clearly it is not possible for you to be able to succeed in each of these tasks immediately following the lecture.

Instead it will be important for you to understand where you are starting from and what you need to do individually to make the greatest progress in order to master these important skills.

This self evaluation sheet is designed to help you understand the work which you need to do before you focus down on implementing the changes in your approaches.

Inevitably, different parts of the advice and guidance in the lecture will be more or less relevant to different individuals.

Starting points: Language Mastery, fluency and writing

Is English your first language?	
Are you a fluent English speaker? If your answer is no then what do you need to do to improve your English language skills	
Can you write English fluently and easily? If your answer to this is no then what do you need to do to improve your skills, or to identify and address any underlying problems?	

Now complete the questions on the following pages:

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Read each of the statements
Score your answer on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree)

Strongly agree ← **Strongly disagree** →

Reading

I'm concerned that my reading skills are not yet good enough for course

1	2	3	4	5
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When I get to some reading I can't remember what I've just read

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Words blur or move around on the page when I read

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I don't know how to pick out what is important in the text

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I often get lost when I'm reading the page

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Writing

I feel that my academic and technical writing skills are weak

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I can't seem to organise my thoughts on the page

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I worry that my writing skills may not be good enough for this course

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I feel comfortable and confident writing academic writing and reports

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Language skills are an important issue for me in writing

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I have written many reports (in English)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I find writing academic writing and reports very difficult

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Literature and Research

I know how to search for journal articles in the library

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I know how to provide references in the work I submit

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I know where to locate primary source data

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I know how to find materials for my coursework e.g. books, journals, online sources etc.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I am already a competent user of a reference manager

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I understand the principles of academic integrity

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I confidently understand the university regulations on academic integrity

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Planning and Action

I find it difficult to know where to start when I'm preparing my assignments

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I can usually judge how long my work will take

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I never leave my work until the last minute

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I usually get my work in the day before it's due

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I usually plan when I will do the research and reading for my work

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I am confident in reflecting on and reviewing my own performance

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Useful Skills/Experience

I have always produced documents using a computer e.g. essays, reports

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I competently process results and statistics on a computer

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I can competently use technical drawing and design tools

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I know how to use LaTeX

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I don't yet know how to use LaTeX but am confident I can learn quickly

1	2	3	4	5
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Motivation/Focus

I often find myself doodling or daydreaming during lectures	1	2	3	4	5
I have trouble motivating myself	1	2	3	4	5
I never seem to be able to find enough time to do my work	1	2	3	4	5
I can't sit and study for long periods of time without becoming tired	1	2	3	4	5
I have the confidence to make independent decisions	1	2	3	4	5

Lectures, tutorials and seminars

I find it difficult to follow what is being taught in lectures	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to concentrate throughout the lecture	1	2	3	4	5
My class notes are usually difficult to understand	1	2	3	4	5
My have my own way of taking notes which works well	1	2	3	4	5
Notes I make in lectures tend to be disjointed and incoherent	1	2	3	4	5

Exams

I struggle with exams	1	2	3	4	5
I find exams easier than coursework and prefer exams	1	2	3	4	5
I have problems developing effective revision strategies	1	2	3	4	5
I usually do all my revision the night before the exam	1	2	3	4	5

Working with others

I have experience of negotiating successfully with other people	1	2	3	4	5
I have led a classroom discussion	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable working as part of a group	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at listening to other people's points of view	1	2	3	4	5
I can think of tasks that are best tackled by a group rather than by myself	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable talking in front of an audience	1	2	3	4	5

Why did you ask such a wide range of questions?

In order to write successfully you need to be able to deal with the mechanics of writing, but you will also need to fit your writing tasks around the rest of your commitments.

Students may choose to select options which they consider balance the relative personal advantages and disadvantages of courseworks and exams to enable them to focus their attention more effectively.

Similarly, addressing motivation, or working with others to review work, may be a useful approach when improving your writing. The challenge is to understand individually where you need to apply effort.

Extra thoughts....

- Are there any areas that you think mean you have particular strengths?
- Are there areas that are causing you concern?
- If English is not your first language, are you taking additional language classes or independent study during the term to make sure that you become more fluent by the end of your degree?
- If you are fluent, but have trouble organising your writing, does this require practice and attention, or does some underlying problem need to be addressed with professional help e.g. dyslexia support?