Work Report (WKRPT) Guidelines

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Importance of Written Communication

To be an effective communicator, you must develop your listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Because businesses and institutions rely on the written word, employers value employees who have effective writing skills. Research shows that practice improves writing skills. Writing a work report is a good opportunity for you to practise your writing. It is also a good chance to analyze a topic of interest or to recommend a change in a process.

1.2 The Benefits of Writing Work Reports

Writing a work report gives you an opportunity to improve your skills in

- researching a topic
- organizing material
- analyzing a problem, process, or situation
- writing a report

Employers demand these skills. You will be valuable to a company if you can identify procedures, determine causes of problems, propose practical solutions, and create a report that summarizes this information. These skills are useful in your academic work as well.

2.0 Academic Requirements

2.1 Work Report Content

If you and your employer feel that the work you performed does not lend itself to a work report, you have a number of options. For example, you can

- analyze general business practices in the company
- analyze how the company could have used your skills more effectively

Remember to write tactfully and to offer constructive criticism. Work reports must contain analytical content.

2.2 Work Report Evaluation

Qualified university personnel evaluate your work report for

- technical content
- analysis
- organization and formatting
- clarity of writing
- critical analysis
- spelling, grammar, and punctuation

2.3 Work Report Awards

The Department of Geography recognizes well-written work reports with work report awards.

3.0 CO-OP WORK REPORT STRUCTURE

3.1 Organization and Formatting

Your work report should be well organized and professional. It must be between 1500 and 2000 words, excluding the Title Page, Letter or Memorandum of Submittal, Table of Contents, and Executive Summary.

A work report has three or four numbered sections:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Analysis (with sections/subsections)

3.0 Conclusions

4.0 Recommendations (optional)

The Executive Summary, References, Acknowledgments, and Appendices do not have section numbers and appear on separate pages.

Organize the sections in the following order:

- Title Page
- Letter of Submittal
- Memorandum of Submittal
- Table of Contents with List of Figures, if appropriate
- Executive Summary

- Introduction
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Recommendations, if appropriate
- References, if appropriate
- Acknowledgments, if appropriate
- Appendices, if any

Number the pages in your report as follows:

- Title Page – no page number appears, but the Title Page is considered page i;
- Letter or Memorandum of Submittal – no page number; considered an insert for academic purposes only;
- Table of Contents – first page of the report to indicate a page number – ii;
- Executive Summary – usually iii; however, if a List of Figures or Tables appears on a separate page after the Table of Contents and precedes the Executive Summary, the Executive Summary becomes iv;
- Introduction begins on page 1. The remainder of the report is numbered sequentially.

Note: List of Figures/List of Tables/List of Tables and Figures

- these lists can appear on the same page as the Table of Contents, if space permits
- they can follow the Table of Contents on a separate page – iii.

Remember to

- use 12-point font
- double space the report
- provide additional spacing between paragraphs
- do not leave large blank spaces between numbered sections
- use headings and subheadings; do not underline
- include page numbers
- use consistent formatting throughout the report

Before submitting your work report, use the Work Report Checklist as a reminder of these formatting requirements.

3.2 Title Page

The Title Page must include the following information and be centered and spaced out over the entire page:

- University of Waterloo
- Faculty of Environment, Department of Geography and Environmental Management
- title of report
- company name and location
- your full name
- student ID number
- previous academic term
- plan
- report number (second, third or fourth)
- month and year that the report was completed

3.3 Letter or Memorandum of Submittal

Work reports must include a Letter or a Memorandum of Submittal which

- follows the title page
- is addressed to the Department Chair – Dr. Johanna Wandel (December) and Dr. Richard Kelly (January onward)
- is left justified

Your Letter or Memorandum of Submittal includes the following information:

- report title
- previous academic term
- supervisor's name and position
- your role in the company
- brief description of your duties
- purpose of the report
- statement of originality
- acknowledgment that the report will be marked by your supervisor prior to the on-campus evaluation
- acknowledgment of assistance
- your name and signature/electronic signature

3.4 Table of Contents and List of Figures

Your report should have a Table of Contents that lists the report's sections, subsections, and page numbers.

If you include figures in the body of your report, you must also include a List of Figures, indicating titles and page numbers. Figures should be numbered, titled, and mentioned in the text preceding them. Large figures may be included in an appendix.

Use tab leaders to guide the reader's eye. Follow the formatting used in the sample Tables of Contents (Figure 4: Word, gif, HTML).

3.5 Executive Summary

One of the most important components of the report is the Executive Summary. It should be written after the rest of the report has been written.

The Executive Summary should be complete in itself and may be consulted by readers to determine whether they need to read the whole report. It appears on a separate page. Limit the Executive Summary to one page and briefly present

- the purpose of the report
- the key points of the analysis
- the highlights of the conclusions
- the highlights of the recommendations

3.6 Introduction

The Introduction establishes the purpose of the report and conveys the contents of the Analysis. You should provide the reader with the following information:

- necessary background information
- assumptions used
- major points covered in the report
- the situation or problem that is analyzed
- the purpose of the work report and the methodology used

3.7 Analysis

Your work report must include significant analytical content. A description of the steps in a process is not sufficient. The following list provides examples of acceptable analytical content:

- a discussion of cause and effect
- a discussion of advantages and disadvantages
- a comparison of two or more systems or products

The following are examples of acceptable analyses:

- Why does a problem exist?
- How does the problem affect specific jobs in the workplace?
- How does the new system or product solve a problem?
- What aspects of the problem have been improved? How?
- What problems does the system or product not solve? Why not?
- How can the system or product be improved?

3.8 Conclusion

The Conclusion section should be brief and should contain no new information. Conclusion should not make direct reference to sources, figures, or tables. Each conclusion should follow logically from the facts and arguments presented in the Analysis section.

3.9 Recommendations

This section is optional because recommendations are not appropriate for all reports.

Recommendations are essentially speculative but should be brief and should follow logically from the conclusions. Include comments derived from experience that may improve future activities of the company.

3.10 References

Whenever possible, support statements with concrete, specific examples. If you refer to a published work, cite the reference in the text even if the reference is not a direct quotation. Include the author and year of publication.

For example,

> One geographer calls Passive Microwave Data "the data acquisition method with the most potential" (Gordison, 1995).

Full citation should appear at the end of the report in a section entitled "References." If you consult a journal paper, include the article's title in quotation marks and underline or italicize the journal title. If you consult a book, underline or italicize the title.

For example,

> Gordison, B.E. "Snow Cover Information From Passive Microwave Data", Geomatics and Snow in Canada. Toronto, Canada. 1995

Footnotes are not required.

The Dana Porter and Davis Centre Libraries have reference material explaining how to cite electronic sources.

3.11 Acknowledgments

You may wish to acknowledge people who helped you with your work report. For example, you may thank someone you interviewed or someone whose files you borrowed. Do so in the last paragraph of your letter or memo, or include a separate acknowledgments page where you thank each person and explain briefly how he or she helped.

4.0 WRITING TIPS

4.1 Writing for an Audience

When drafting the report, write for a reader with a background similar to your own. However, do not assume knowledge of technical terms specific to your workplace.

Potential audiences include your

- classmates
- co-op supervisor
- co-workers
- successor

To avoid discriminatory and awkward language in your work, use gender-neutral language.

Ways to avoid the awkwardness of repeatedly using "he or she" and "his or her" follow.

Example – incorrect (repetition of "he or she," "his or her")

The developer must install the software on his or her computer and then configure the program to his or her needs. He or she then needs to re-boot the computer. Finally, he or she must run the application and check to make sure that the configuration is working correctly.

Examples – correct

(i) Rewrite the section to make it neutral.

The developer must install the software on the computer, configure the program to meet individual purposes or needs, and then re-boot the computer. The final step is to run the application and to make sure that the configuration is working correctly.

(ii) Rewrite the section to make it plural.

Developers must install the software on their computers and then configure the programs to their individual needs. They then need to re-boot the computers. Finally, they must run the applications and make sure that the configurations are working correctly.

4.2 Avoiding Confidential Work Reports

Work reports must be evaluated on campus to receive credit, so avoid topics deemed confidential by your supervisor.

If you write a work report which cannot leave your employer's premises, it will not receive credit.

If a work report is considered confidential by your employer, it can be arranged so that the report is shared with the evaluator only. A non- disclosure agreement could be arranged if necessary. Some work report material may only be a time sensitive nature and once published or public, the material may no longer be confidential in nature.

If your work report is to remain confidential, please note this fact in your Memorandum or Letter of Submittal so that your employer will know that access will be restricted to a single reader.

Please note that confidential work reports are not eligible for work report awards.

4.3 Drafting an Outline

The purpose of an outline is to help you organize and visualize your report. Do not submit it with your report.

Headings and subheadings clarify your organization and help the reader follow your argument.

4.4 Writing the Report

Set aside at least three weeks to complete the report. Brainstorm and put your ideas on paper. At this stage, the main concern should be the content and flow of ideas rather than the way that the ideas are expressed.

Remember to discuss your proposed topic with your supervisor to ensure that it is not confidential.

Use your report outline to guide the writing process and remember that all paragraphs should

- contain strong introductory sentences
- cover only one point
- contain sentences that relate only to the main point indicated in the introductory sentence

4.5 Revising the Report

After completing the first draft of the report, set it aside for several days before beginning revisions. You will be able to assess your report objectively. To achieve clear, concise, and accurate writing, follow these suggestions:

- use formal, standard, non-poetic language
- write in the third person
- do not use contractions
- define acronyms the first time that they are used
- use a dictionary and thesaurus
- read the report aloud to eliminate grammatical and stylistic errors

- ask a colleague to critique it
- spell-check
- Consult the Common Errors PDF
- review errors made in previous reports
- proofread

5.0 HELP WITH WRITING

5.1 The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides free, non-credit tutorial sessions, consulting hours, and seminars to help students with their writing.

The Writing Centre, located in the Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology Building is open to students. For more information about scheduling, call 888-4567, extension 32329. Writing Centre tutors do not proofread work reports.

5.2 English Electives on Campus

The Department of Geography suggests that students who want to improve their writing take an English elective. You may be required to take one or more of these courses already, see the Undergraduate Calendar for details and for course listings.

It is strongly recommended that all students purchase A Canadian Writer's Reference by Diana Hacker, available in the UW Bookstore. Consult this handbook to understand and correct your errors.