Guide to Report Writing 2018/19

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1. About this guide . . . .

Frequently, at university, an assignment will require students to produce an answer in the form of a report. Similarly, at work, reports are often used to address a particular issue or to consider the findings of some research.

This guide aims to support students to write good quality, well set out reports and to address some of the frequently asked questions about report writing at Harper Adams University.

This guide contains generic guidelines for writing reports; read the assignment brief carefully and look at departmental guidelines for sector specific formats.

Using the guide………

This guide has been divided up into sections to examine all the elements of producing a report. It will consider:

Layout: How to structure a report to include the correct sections

Preparation and Planning: things to consider before starting

Presenting data and illustrations: tables, figures and photos

Writing the report – essential characteristics: Useful tips for writing summaries, introductions, main text and conclusions

Getting it right: looking at the 'little things' that trip students up. Addressing FAQs.

Checklist: a simple list to check that everything is in place before hand-in

So what is a report?

A report addresses a particular subject or issue. It uses information and/or data that may be historic or current or a mixture of both. Within a report there will be description; analysis; and critical evaluation leading to informed conclusions supported by evidence.

How does a report differ from an essay?

"A report is a statement of an investigation or of any matter on which definitive information is required." (Oxford English Dictionary, 2008)

"Essays are an intellectual exploration of a topic involving looking at different arguments and evidence and developing the writer's perspective." (Plymouth University, 2011, p1)

To compare reports and essays, look at Table 1 which outlines the main differences between the two styles of presentation

Table 1 Differences between Reports and Essays

Report	Essay
Formal structure	Structure can be left to the discretion of the writer but normally has in paragraphs, an introduction, main text and conclusion
Defined sections with headings, including, as required: Methodology, Results/findings, Discussion/evaluation (See Section 2: Layout)	Does not contain subheadings (Some essays will contain subheading- consider your tutors advice and industrial/ publication standards when deciding this). Different points are written as paragraphs
Commences with a Summary or Abstract before the Introduction	Commences with an Introduction; there is no Abstract or Summary
Systematically defines and analyses a subject or problem	Discusses, explains, analyses, interprets or evaluates a topic
Used to communicate the results or findings of a project/piece of research, scientific research or business reporting	Used to develop points or arguments in depth via a sequence of paragraphs (discursive writing)
Different sections may require different styles of writing throughout, depending on their purpose, but represent a continual 'argument'	Same writing style is generally maintained throughout and should contain a narrative and argument
May include tables, figures and illustrations	Often though not exclusively, no illustrative material accompanies prose
Information may be recorded in bullet points in sections where relevant to do so; should be linked by prose	Written as a narrative in continuous prose, synthesized together in paragraphs
Contain a conclusion and may make recommendations for future actions	Very unusual to make recommendations although conclusions will be drawn

A Guide to Essay Writing is available separately

2. Layout: how to structure a report

Reports are written for different audiences and consequently their exact layout may vary. Specific industries or institutions will have their own 'house style'; however, as a general rule the following common elements should be present:-

Title page	Title of report, student ID, Module reference number and title, Module tutor or leader, date, word count

Contents page	List of chapters/section headings with corresponding **page numbers**; list of illustrations (tables and figures separately); list of Appendices

Summary **Not numbered**	Also known as an **Abstract**. An overview, stand-alone section. See Section 5: Writing the Report

1.0 Introduction	What the report will be about. See Section 5: Writing the Report

2.0 Main body	Includes as appropriate, any methodology, results and discussions. Includes numbered sub-sections. See Section 5: Writing the Report

3.0 Conclusion	May include also recommendations. See Section 5: Writing the Report

References **Not numbered**	Precise details of the work of others (Refer to HAU Guide to Referencing)

Appendices	Lengthy and detailed material that informed the report. Contains supporting evidence, but this evidence is not essential to the main argument. Includes statistics, questionnaires, interviews, glossary etc. Each appendix is numbered but the section itself is not.

Always check the assignment brief for any variations in layout.

"Failing to plan is planning to fail."

(Variously attributed to Benjamin Franklin, Winston Churchill and Alex Lakein)

Before any work can begin, the scope or 'terms of reference' of the report need to be clearly understood.

Key questions to ask:

- What is the report about?
- What will it cover?
- What is outside the brief?

(Source: heacademy, 2005)

Time Management

It is essential to allow enough time to complete all the stages in writing a report ahead of the deadline, including slippage time to allow for unforeseen circumstances.

Time needs to be allocated to each of the stages in planning and writing the report. These include:
- Preliminaries
- Research
- Organising the content
- Writing draft versions
- Completing the task

Use an organising system to allocate times/days to each stage of the process; these include:-
- Outlook Diary
- Paper Diary
- Phone App
- Gantt Chart
- Event Schedule Planner (Word – Template - Office 2013)
- Various Excel planners

The Planning and Writing Process – a six stage model for completing the task

Study the model on the following page(s) to complete the report planning and writing process in timely fashion.

The Six Stage Planning and Writing Process

Planning:

Stage 1: Clarifying the brief

- Make sure that the assignment brief is fully understood.
- What are the instructions?
- What was said at the assignment launch?
- What are the marking criteria?
- If unsure, ask for clarification.

Stage 2: Doing the research

- Check the reading list for the assignment and any additional departmental reading lists.
- Be specific about what needs to be researched/analysed. What key words will inform your literature search?
- Use Find it @ Harper and other recommended data bases (e.g. Science Direct).
- If unclear, ask the library staff for help in using the databases and research tools.
- Do not rely on the Internet – check the validity of the sites used.
- Use peer reviewed journals rather than the popular journals (although these can be a good starting point).
- Read abstracts and summaries and assess usefulness.
- Don't forget books and e-books! The library has an extensive range!
- Check the contents and indices of books for relevant ideas.
- Ensure when making notes, all the details of each reference are recorded for the reference list.

Stage 3: Organising the content

- Re-examine the assignment brief.
- Review the notes made and group under the various headings.
- Be ruthless – discard anything that is not relevant or does not address the brief.
- Avoid padding.
- Make sure ideas are paraphrased into own words – avoid 'copy and paste'.
- Make sure the order is logical.

Writing:

Stage 4: Analysis

- Don't be narrative and simply describe the information/data.
- Critically examine the material gathered.
- What evidence has been found to make or substantiate the points?
- Are there any contrasting/conflicting theories, ideas or arguments?
- Does any of the research have limitations?
- Does the material relate to the assignment brief task?
- On balance, is there a compelling conclusion?

Stage 5: Drafting

- Follow the correct report structure for reports at Harper Adams University (see Section 5: Writing the report - essential characteristics).
- Be simple and concise; don't include superfluous words and unnecessary detail.
- Avoid jargon but use correct technical terms.
- Include and make reference to tables, graphs and illustrations as appropriate.
- Include sub-headings for greater clarification.
- Read the draft and see if it is possible to remove 25% of the words without changing the meaning.
- Check assignment brief to ensure all aspects covered.
- Make changes – redraft.

Stage 6: Proof reading

- Use the spelling and grammar checker; be careful to set it to the UK version.
- Read the report out loud – this helps check punctuation and that sentences and paragraphs make sense.
- Check all names, businesses, individual places are consistently presented and spelling accurate
- Acronyms (see Section 6: Getting it right)
- Check all ideas and work by other authors have been cited in the text and correctly referenced in the reference list.
- Check all tables, figures and illustrations are numbered, have titles and the source is acknowledged.
- Ensure that text is paraphrased (own words) and there is no 'copy and paste'.
- Ensure, where necessary, quotation marks are in place and correctly cited.
- Check layout, contents page, page numbers, labelling/captions.

(Source: Adapted from Learning Development, University of Leicester, 2009)

4. Presenting data and illustrations: tables, figures, diagrams and photographs

In some assignment reports, it is part of the assessment to include a word-processed table or a series of graphs or charts. In other cases, a diagram, graph, table or photograph can often save many words and display information in a relevant, clear manner that aids understanding. However, unless the illustration is labelled, introduced and then discussed, it *does not add value* to the report and is a waste of time!

Remember the 'illustration sandwich': Introduce **->** Insert illustration **->** Discuss

4.1 Tables

- Tables are used to present results or summarise written information, for example, to compare and contrast two processes. In certain circumstances, particularly if reporting interviews, Text boxes, Speech Bubbles or Word Clouds may be used; check assignment brief to see if this is acceptable for the report.
- Tables usually support or illustrate points in the text and should be signposted (for example 'see Table 1').
- **The caption (title) is above the table.**

For example:

Numbered in sequence for ease of reference in text

Clear, full and explicit title **ABOVE** the table

Units clearly identified & high up in table to avoid repetition

Table 2 UK bat species population trends summary table, 2013

Bat Species	Survey type	No. sites trend analysis	Base year	Long term trend (since base year) %	Average annual change %
Whiskered /Brandt's	Hibernation	189	1999	31.4	2.0
Natter's	Hibernation	415	1999	93.6	4.8
Soprano Pipistrelle	Field	561	1999	19.2	1.3
Brown long eared	Roost	143	2001	12.4	1.0
Daubenton's	Waterway	821	1999	4.5	0.3

(Source: Adapted from NBMP Survey results, 2013)

Numbers to be compared presented in columns

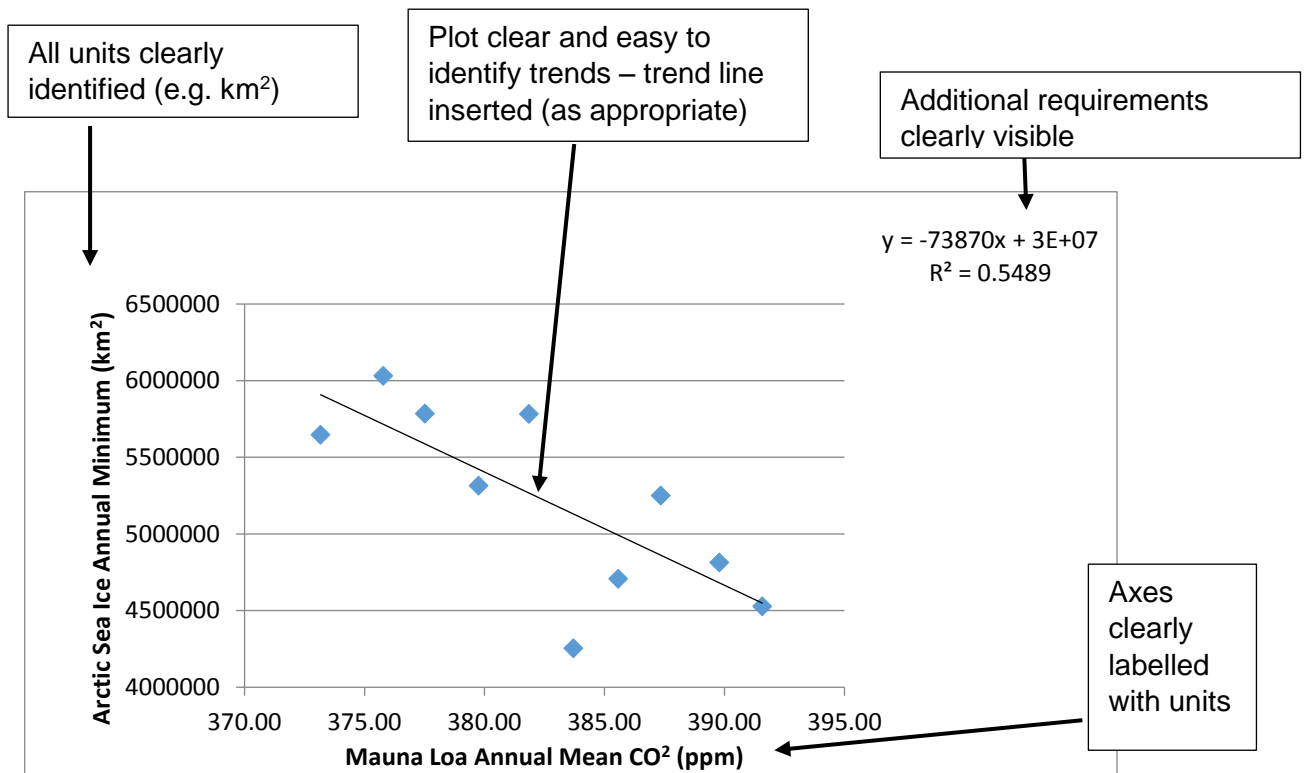Source clearly stated and offset to right

4.2 Figures

These include everything that is *not a table* – graphs, charts, diagrams, photographs.

The type of figure chosen will depend on the nature of the data and the purpose for which it is to be used.

- Numerical data can often be more clearly understood as a graph or *chart*, for example line, scatter plot, histogram, bar chart, and pie chart.
- Processes can often be made more explicit by a flow chart.
- Complicated machines or interrelationships lend themselves to diagrams.
- Photographs can illustrate many things such as diseases, landscape features or machinery; they can be of great use if annotated.
- Figures (like tables) should be signposted in the text (see Figure 1).

Whatever type of figure used, the caption (title) goes below it and below the source.

4.2.1 Charts

All units clearly identified (e.g. km²)

Plot clear and easy to identify trends – trend line inserted (as appropriate)

Additional requirements clearly visible

$y = -73870x + 3E+07$
$R^2 = 0.5489$

Axes clearly labelled with units

(Source: Adapted from NOAA ESRL, 2012)

Figure 1 Relationship between Mauna Loa Annual Mean CO$_2$ (ppm) and Arctic Sea Ice Annual Minimum (km²)

Source clearly stated and offset to right, above title

Clear, full and explicit title **UNDERNEATH** the figure

4.2.2. Photographs

A photograph should be included to illustrate a point rather than to look pretty. Annotated or labelled photographs can help add clarity or explain points or processes to the reader. They are labelled as **Figures**. Copyright must be checked before a photograph is included. The source/photographer must be acknowledged; if the photo is the author's own this should be stated (See HAU Guide to Referencing).

4.2.3 Diagrams

These may be compiled from information to present it in an easier format e.g. a flow chart of a process. Diagrams may also be illustrative e.g. the workings of an engine or a body part such as the heart. Again copyright must be checked for using diagrams from certain organisations; be careful if copying from the internet.

The source of the diagram if not the author's own must also be acknowledged.

4.3 Equations

See Section 6: **Getting it Right,** page 14

4.4 Listing

Tables, figures and equations should be listed after the contents list, on the contents page.

Tables should be numbered sequentially throughout the report.

Figures should be numbered sequentially throughout the report.
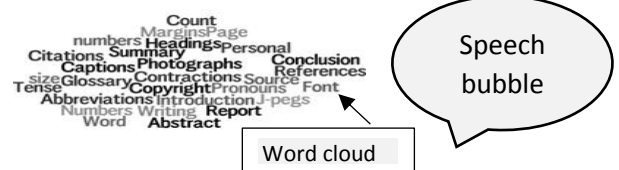
4.5 Word count for illustrations

Captions (titles) for tables and figures do **NOT** count in the word count.

Tables that are summaries of written work **DO** count in the word count. Alternative writing formats such as Speech Bubbles and Word Clouds **DO** count in the word count

Tables that contain data do **NOT** count in the word count.

5. Writing the report – essential characteristics: useful tips for writing summaries, introductions, main text and conclusions

The Summary (also known as an Abstract):-

- ✓ Brings together all the essential elements of the report.
- ✓ Provides a concise overview of the main themes.
- ✓ Should be able to be read as a stand-alone section (for someone who doesn't have time to read the whole document – but your tutor will!).
- ✓ Should reflect the topic or question, the methodology, key findings and conclusions.
- ✓ Is not a detailed discussion – includes the bare bones.
- ✓ Citations/references should **NOT** be included.
- ✓ Is written in the **past tense** (e.g. data showed, research found etc.) in the third person.
- ✓ Goes at the **start** of the report but is written **after** the report has been finished
- ✓ Is usually no more than 10% of the word count of the assignment (e.g. a 2000 word report has a summary of about 200 words) but check the brief for specific instructions for length.
- ✓ Is **NOT** numbered

The Introduction:-

- ✓ A good introduction should grab the reader's interest!
- ✓ It should explain what the report is about – this shows understanding of the brief.
- ✓ It should explain why the report is being written:
    - What is the background, history and current state of events?
    - What is known already?
    - What is the context/background against which the current report is set?
- ✓ It can include examples and interesting details (including statistics).
- ✓ It should clearly articulate the scope of the report – what it will cover and importantly, if relevant, what will not be included. This is sometimes known as the 'terms of reference'.
- ✓ It should give an indication of how the material will be dealt with – a 'road map' of the report – what should the reader expect and in what order:-
    e.g. "This report will analyse the relative advantages and disadvantages of the different operating systems." (Birmingham City University, 2008)
    "Based on interviews, this report examines three problem areas." (Canberra University, 2013)
- ✓ It is written in the **present and future tense** (e.g. shall, will etc.) in the third person.
- ✓ It should be about 8 – 10% of the length of the report (e.g. 2000 word report should have an introduction of 160 – 200 words)
- ✓ It is numbered 1.0 and comes **after** the Summary

The **main body** (do **not** call it this!):-

- ✓ Needs a good overarching title that reflects the subject of the report.
- ✓ Layout depends on the subject of the report; a scientific report will differ from a business report or topic review (See HAU Guide 'Writing up Science Based Practical Reports').
- ✓ Choose sub-headings that reflect the content of the material under discussion and create a clear structure and logical flow. Numbered appropriately.
- ✓ Differentiate headings by using different sizes and /or capitals and lower case. Use the headings tool bar in Word. (See Headings and Notation in Section 6 *Getting it Right*, page 14). Whatever system used, be consistent.
- ✓ Outline the material researched then discuss and evaluate its significance/importance. Useful key words and phrases can be found in Appendix 2.
- ✓ Evaluate and critically review the material; not just what, when, where but also, how, why, what if, what next, so what?
- ✓ Discuss findings: layout depends on the assignment brief; findings can be outlined then discussed or each finding can be discussed as the report progresses.
- ✓ Ensure balance and use evidence to support ideas.
- ✓ Avoid using jargon or 'consultant speak'; keep it simple and straightforward but use technical terms appropriately. Write in the third person.
- ✓ Explain acronyms and abbreviations.
- ✓ Be mindful of the word count; be concise – don't use superfluous language.

Table 3 Examples of superfluous words and alternatives

Superfluous words	Alternative
At this point in time	Now **(Not nowadays!)**
A large proportion	Many
Absolutely necessary	Essential
By virtue of the fact	Because
Was of the opinion that	Thought
In the absence of	Without
Very, totally, completely are often redundant i.e. they add nothing	

(Source: Adapted from writersservices.com, 2014)

- ✓ Include citations: everything that is not an original idea **must** have a citation which is fully acknowledged in the reference list (See HAU Guide to Referencing and Section 6 *Getting it Right*, pages 13 and 16).
- ✓ Do not 'over cite': in a paragraph, only if several authors' ideas are included does each sentence/point need to be cited; otherwise one acknowledgement will suffice.
- ✓ Don't plagiarise! Avoid 'copy and paste' and ensure that text is written in own words and that quotations of others' work are in quotation marks and properly cited and referenced. (See HAU Guide to Referencing).
- ✓ Write in the **present and past tense.**

The **conclusion**:-

- ✓ Is a relatively short section.
- ✓ **No new ideas** or evidence should be included.
- ✓ **No** citations or references should be included; it is the writer's ideas/decisions about the material researched.
- ✓ Captures the main findings and explanations from the report; a good discussion will make these points obvious!
- ✓ States what has been found and the evidence to justify this; does not simply repeat the findings.
- ✓ Can give recommendations for further action.
- ✓ Written in the third person.

In an assignment report, it is **not necessary** to start each section on a new page; however, in some assignment briefs there may be a specific request to, for example, include the Summary/Abstract on a separate page or on the front cover. Read the brief!

This differs from a P.R.P or H.R.P where each chapter should start on a new page or the world of work where business/government reports start each section/chapter on a new page.

5.1 Academic Integrity

The work you produce for assessment should always meet integrity standards. This means work you produce should;
- Be in your *own* words (with the exception of quotations, which will be cited appropriately to identify them)
- Be paraphrased effectively to communicate ideas and principles of others, but in such a way that the original words are not used verbatim (or with only minor changes)
- Acknowledge, in the form of citations, when you are drawing on the work of others
- Include accurate information when citing in text (see HAU Guide to Referencing)
- Include a reference list providing full details of cited sources (see HAU Guide to Referencing)
- Have not been previously submitted for another assessment (self-plagiarism)

Turnitin (text matching software) is available to help you check your work prior to submission. A link to this is on the home page of the learning HUB and a guide to interpreting a Turnitin report is on the *Study Advice* page.

6. *Getting it right:* avoiding common mistakes and addressing FAQs

This section looks at common mistakes made in report writing and how to avoid them and addresses frequently asked questions from students.

Abbreviations/

Acronyms and

Initials: Abbreviations could be used for common terms such as; cm (centimetre), Dr (doctor), *et al* (and others) £3m (three million pounds) etc. But you must ensure these are common to both your discipline and reader before using them. If in doubt use the full term.

Acronyms are a form of abbreviation. It is acceptable to use acronyms for names of important features, organisations or places within a report; however, the first time used, the name should be written in full with the abbreviation following in brackets. E.g. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Once the acronym has been used, **be consistent;** do not go back to writing the name/term in full.

A note of caution – too many abbreviations in a paragraph and report can cause the reader to disengage from the meaning of the text.

If a lot of abbreviations are used it may be appropriate to include a list after the Contents Page. See Glossary.

Captions (titles): Each table or figure should have a title known as a caption. For tables this should be **above** and for figures it should be **below**.

Do **not** write 'Graph to show….' - it is obviously a graph!

Tables and figures should be numbered separately and in order from 1; numbers should be sequential throughout the report. Do not mix up the numbering for tables and figure.

Source information is required on all tables and figure, expect when entirely created by yourself (offset to the right and above the title for figures). See Source (data) page 16. Authors own photographs do require a source.

Citations: Any idea that is included in the text must be acknowledged in a citation. If the whole paragraph is from one author, only one citation is needed; however, if more than one author's ideas are included, each sentence based on a different author must have a citation. (See H.A.U. Guide to Referencing)

Contractions: For academic reports where the answer is written in a more formal style, contractions should not be used, i.e. don't should be written as do not, can't as cannot, shouldn't as should not etc. Their use is acceptable in less formal writing and in some reports from businesses.

Copyright: Before including any kind of illustration, including photographs, copyright rules should be checked and adhered to.

Equations: Equations are included in a number of reports. They should be presented in the middle of the line/page and be numbered using a bracket e.g. (1) at the right-hand margin.

E.g. $$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a} \tag{1}$$

In the report equations should be referred to as either Eq. (1) or equation (1) but be consistent! (Monash University, 2007).

There should be a list of equations on the Contents page.

Font size & style: Font size should be no less than 11. Report writing fonts may be specified in the assignment brief but if not, use sans serif such as Calibri, Arial Tahoma.

Front cover: Include:-

- o Title of the report
- o Module number (and title) for which it was written
- o Student ID number **NOT** name
- o Tutor for whom written
- o Date report submitted
- o Word count

Glossary: In some reports, if a lot of abbreviations, acronyms or standard units have been used, a glossary can be provided after the contents page explaining the meaning of each.

Headings: ***& Notation***	All types of headings at the same level must be in the same format and size. They should **NOT** be underlined.

Use the Home tab on Word to differentiate between headings for different sections and to number using the decimal system.

E.g. ## 3. Environmental Impacts of Sea Bed Trawling (Font 16)

3.1 Types of trawling mechanism – Type A (Font 13)
3.1.1 Impact of Type A on species vulnerability (Font 12)
3.1.2 Vulnerable locations – Type A fishing (Font 12)

To be able to cross reference, each major section of a report has a numbered heading; sub-sections generally use a decimal numbering system as shown above.

Insertions:	Any insertion into the report of text, tables, figures, 'Snips' etc. **must** be acknowledged with a source/citation and a reference.

The body of the report should be typed in Word. It is **not acceptable** to insert text as images or Snips or other formats.

Text (written work) must **not** be inserted as a JPEG in a report.

Text using translation software should be correctly cited and referenced.

Screen shots of figures from Excel should **not** be used; charts should be copied and pasted with appropriate labels and sources.

Line spacing:	Unless stated otherwise in the assignment brief it is acceptable to use single line spacing; read the brief!

Margins:	Remember, an assignment has to be presented in a folder so margins should not be narrow, particularly the left hand margin; other margins should allow for marking and written feedback. Some assignment briefs may specify the sizes to be used.

Numbers:	Numbers under ten and at the beginning of sentences should be written in words; numbers over ten should be written in figures.

E.g. There were nine counties in the survey. Twenty three percent of riders had experienced back problems in the 350 riding schools surveyed.

Page numbers (and formatting): Front cover should **not** have a number.

Guidance on setting up page numbering can be found on the Learning Hub- Study Advice-Report Writing.

Personal Pronouns: Reports are written impersonally so personal pronouns - I, we, you - should **not** be used. E.g. 'It is thought that…..' *not* 'I think that….'

Only if the report is a reflective one, is it acceptable to use the first person; this should be checked with the brief.

Photographs: Photographs should be labelled as Figures and numbered sequentially with the other figures included in the report. (See also Copyright)

References: Should be after the Conclusion and before the Appendices (See HAU Guide to Referencing).

The Reference section does **not** have a number.

References should match the citations in the text. Material which has been read for background but not referred to should be in a *bibliography*. But check if this is necessary. Useful key words and phrases can be found in Appendix 2.

Source (data): If the data in the report has been collected and analysed by the author of the report there is **no need** to write "author's own" as the source under any tables or figures compiled from it. The exception is authors own photographs which do require a source.

However, if the data is secondary data (i.e. collected by someone else), the source should be acknowledged under the table or figure; if the data has been adapted from secondary sources, this should be acknowledged.
The source acknowledges the person who collected the data **not** the person who compiled the figure so it should **NOT** be labelled 'Author's own'.

E.g.   (Source: DEFRA, 2013)
        (Source: Adapted from DEFRA, 2013)

Summary: This section may be referred to as an Abstract and should be able to be read in isolation from the report. As such, in academic writing it does **not** have a section number.

Tense: Different sections of the report require the use of different tenses. See guidance in section 5.

Word count: Each assignment will have a **word limit** or **page limit**.

                          A word limit is a limit and is non-negotiable; it is a myth that there is a tolerance of 10% either side!

                          Work that exceeds the word limit may not be marked.

                          Some assignments have a page limit; the brief will usually specify the margin size and the font size required.

Table 4 Words included in the word count of a report

Count in	Do not include
• Summary/Abstract (text only)* • Introduction (text only) • Main body (text only) • Discussion (if applicable – text only) • Conclusion (text only) • Text displayed in tables and in other formats such as Speech Bubbles, Word Clouds, Snips etc. • In text citations *Check assignment brief for any specific/additional instructions for word count for summary/abstract	• Reference list • Appendices • Data in tables • Results in tables • Any figures (graphs, charts, diagrams) • Headings and Subheadings (Summary, Introduction etc.) • Captions (titles) for tables and figures

NB. Final year projects may have different expectations – check the HRP/PRP guide

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Academic Guidance Team: other useful sources, information leaflets and guides

Guides:

- HAU Guide to Essay Writing – contains command words and useful academic phrases from the Manchester University Phrasebank.
  Very useful site. (http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/)
- HAU Guide to Writing Up Science Based Practical Reports

Information leaflets:

- Report Writing
- Summaries, Introductions and Conclusions
- Note Taking
- Paraphrasing
- Referencing and Citations
- Editing
- Proof Reading
- Managing your Word Count
- Writing Literature Reviews

On the Learning Hub

Academic Guidance has a Study Resource area on the Hub. On the Tool Bar go to

Student Information ⟶ Study Support ⟶ Study Adv

Appendix 1

Report Writing Checklist

Check you report against the following to ensure you have included everything and checked for errors and omissions:

Section / Presentation	Check for:	√ or X
Title page	Does this include: Title? Module reference number & title? Module tutor or leader? Date? Word count?	
Contents	Are all the main sections listed in the right order? Is there a list of illustrations? Are the page numbers correct and correctly aligned?	
Summary	Does this include: The subject/issue of the report? Any methods used? Findings? Conclusions reached? Any recommendations made? Is it written in the past tense?	
Introduction	Does this include: The terms of reference? (**What** it's about) The limits of the report if any? An outline methodology? (**How** it is to be dealt with) A brief background to the subject matter? (**Why** it's important)	
Main body with suitable title	Does it include: Relevant sub-headings to give a clear structure? The form the enquiry took? Any results/findings from research? The way any data was collected? Identification of key issues? Explanations for findings? Have the issues been critically evaluated? Have any personal pronouns been removed (I, we, you, us), written in the third person? Citations are presented accurately?	
Illustrations	Are diagrams clear and simple? Are they clearly labelled with tables labelled above and figures below? Are they numbered sequentially?	

Section / Presentation	Check for:	√ or X
	Do they relate closely to, and are signposted to the text? Have they been introduced and discussed?	
Conclusions and recommendations	Have the main ideas been drawn together Are the consequences of these made clear? Are further actions recommended? Has the inclusion of new information been avoided?	
References	Are the references in alphabetical order? Do the references conform to the Harper Adams Guide to Referencing? Has the reference list been checked for accuracy? Have all the reference types required by the assignment brief been included? Are all references cited in the text? Are all citations referenced in the list?	
Appendices	Does the appendices only contain reference materials illustrating and supporting arguments fully made in the main body of the work?	
Writing style	Is the language clear and concise? Are the sentences short and jargon free? Are the paragraphs tightly focussed? Has the passive voice been used (no personal pronouns)? Do paragraphs cover one main point and move the reader logically through the work?	
Layout	Is each section clearly titled? Are titles consistent in font and size? Are numbered sections sequential?	
Presentation	Are the margins large enough for binding and feedback? Is spelling, punctuation and grammar accurate? Are names, businesses and places consistently presented and accurately spelt? Has work been paraphrased? Have all sources been acknowledged?	
Word count	Is the report within the word limit? Has the word count been checked against Table 4 on page 17	
Other	Compared with marking criteria?	

(Source: adapted from heacademy, 2005)

Appendix 2

Useful words and phrases

Establishing the importance of the topic:
- X is a common…
- X is an important…
- Recent development in…
- In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in…
- Recent developments in the field of x…
- Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in…

Highlighting a problem or controversy in the field of study:
- However, these rapid changes are having a serious effect…
- However, a major problem with this is…
- To date there has been little agreement on what…
- More recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings about…
- There is increasing concern that…
- Concerns have been raised by several relevant bodies…
- The issue of x has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of…
- The issue has grown in importance in light of recent…

Highlighting a knowledge gap in the field of study (for research):
- So far, however, there has been little discussion about…
- However, far too little attention has been paid to…
- Most studies in x have only been carried out in a small number of areas…
- The research to date has tended to focus on x rather than y…

Focus and aim:
- This paper will focus on…
- This paper will examine…
- This paper will give an account of…
- This paper seeks to address the following questions…
- This essay critically examines…
- This essay critically discusses…
- The purpose of this paper is to review recent research into the…
- This paper will review the research conducted on…
- This chapter reviews the literature concerning the usefulness of …
- The aim of this paper is to determine…
- The aim of this study was to evaluate and validate…

Referring to literature:
General descriptions of the relevant literature:
- A considerable amount of literature has been published on x. These studies…
- In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on…
- A large and growing body of literature has investigated…

General reference to previous research:
- Many have argued that…
- Numerous studies have attempted to explain…
- Recent evidence suggests that…
- Previous studies have reported that…
- A number of studies have found that…

Reference to single investigations:
- Smith (2016) found that…..
- Smith *et al.* (2017) stated that…
- Smith (2016) showed that…
- Smith et al. (2017) investigated the…
- Smith (2016) studied the effects of…
- Smith *et al.* (2017) carried out a number of investigations into the…
- In 2017, Smith *et al.* published a paper in which they described… (if Smith is one of several authors)
- A recent study by Smith (2016) involved…
- A small scale study by Smith (2016) reaches different conclusions…
- To determine the effects of x, Smith (2016) compared…
- Smith (2016) identified…
- Smith *et al.* (2017) listed three reasons why…
- Smith (2016) provided in-depth analysis of work…
- Smith *et al.* (2017) discussed the challenges and strategies for…
- Smith (2016) questioned whether…

Reference other writers' ideas:
- According to Smith (2016)…
- Smith (2016) argues that…
- Smith *et al.* (2017) maintains that…
- This view is supported by Smith (2016) who writes…
- As Smith *et al.* (2017) reminds us…

Ways of introducing quotations:
- Smith (2016) concluded…
- As Smith *et al.* (2017) stated…….

Being critical!
- One major criticism of Smith's (2016) work is that…
- Many writers have challenged Smith's (2016) claim on the grounds that…

Introducing other people's criticisms:
- However, Smith (2016) pointed out that…
- Smith *et al.* (2017) argued that…

(Source: Adapted from: The University of Manchester, 2005)