# Slide 1

This vidcasts is called An introduction to Report writing

This vidcast is divided into 4 chapters. As with all of our vidcasts , you can listen and read individual chapters or just read the material , and or listen and watch the complete vidcast.

Chapter 1 gives an example of a report question. Please note that this is only an example of a question. Then the chapter outlines the structure of the answer.

Chapter 2 explains the accompanying flow chart which demonstrates the report’s content. Again please note that this is an example, and your course work report may be different but the writing conventions are similar.

Chapter 3 outlines report writing conventions and include topics such as appropriate language use, numbering conventions etc.

Chapter 4 considers some common writing problems in reports and how to avoid these.

# Slide 2

When studying at university, lecturers wish you to extend your reading and adopt close reading as opposed to surface reading and they expect that a range of literature will be used and referred to within the text. Close reading means carefully interpreting text. This means, giving attention to at times individual words, syntax, and ideas as they are developed.

As in all course work, you are must to correctly cite the journal articles and books and or websites you have referred to in the text.

Your lecturer will want you to write using your own words but you must clearly inform the reader about the origin of the idea so you will be expected to paraphrase, which means using your own words but remember you must always state the original source for the ideas. This also includes when you are quoting as in using an author’s exact words

# Slide 3

In this example, the student has been asked to prepare a 2,000 words report on professional standards in his or her discipline. The report contains seven sections. Look at the plan for this report on the next slide.

# Slide 4

You will usually find examples of front pages on the individual modular guidelines on GCU Learn. Sometimes, lecturers will state the exact details that they wish cited on the front page. Generally this includes your module name, module code, your student matriculation number, your name and the title of the coursework.

The table of contents should be clear and easy for the reader to follow as this the index to your report. Use headings and subheadings and number both the headings and the subheadings. Please make sure these are logically noted.

The next section is the introduction which is generally 10% of the word count. The introduction should detail the purpose of the report and the main issues that will be explained and discussed in the main body of the report. You may find this easier to write this section last. This is because sometimes you may not be sure about the main content of your report. Please do not just extract sentences from the main body and place them in the introduction in the hope that they make sense. This is obvious to the reader when you have used this. The introduction should be able to be understood by the reader and is a free standing section.

The next two sections are the main parts of the report and they include the literature review and the discussion and or findings of the report. For more details about writing a literature section, refer to the vidcast on writing a literature review. Generally the literature review is approximately 30 % of the word count. This is a very important section of the report as the literature report should give details about the published publications and provide supporting evidence for the authors’ views and or opinions.

The discussion which will contain the findings of the report and is also about 35% of the word count and should refer to the literature and contain recommendations with supporting evidence. Please do not merely state that an action should be taken without justifying to the reader why this is the best or most appropriate course of action. Imagine if you were trying to obtain funding for a project, you would not receive the money without supplying supporting detail.

The final sections are the conclusions and recommendations which equates to approximately 15% of the word count. Sum up the main points addressed in the report and remember if you have been asked for recommendations, note these briefly in this section.

Then list the references. Please refer to the guidelines for your module which will be on GCU Learn.

# Slide 5

**Report Writing Language**

* **Use impersonal language,**
* Remember this is a formal report and unless your lecturer has said please do not refer to I , we and you. The following slides suggest examples in blue and points out problems in red.

**Three health and safety reports identified that…………..**

*or*

**Three specific reports on health safety were found in**

It is very irritating and confusing for the reader if you use conflicting verb tenses, if you are unsure about this then refer to links at the side of the slides on this topic

Use the **present tense** for the Introduction:

**This report examines….**

And the **past** for the Findings

**The results indicated that….**

* Keep the tenses consistent avoid the following as the verb tense keeps changing, which means the sentence is unclear

***Strategies were adopted in the library search that can allow a wide ranging search, which* provides 30 results**

To improve this you could write**:**

**Strategies were adopted in the library research which allowed a wide ranging search. The search provided 30 results.**

* **Use cautious language**

Reports require **cautious language** to suggest implications or inferences **use:**

Do not use:

**Huge, enormous, many**

**It would appear that………….*; this suggests……….; research may…..;, it seems* that……………**

Reports must use complete sentences.

**Stewart (2004) argues that if there is an uneven distribution of power in a partnership, the relationships between members of that partnership can become frayed and disturbances may begin to appear.**

* **Numbering sections**

You may use bullet points and lists in reports if writing a list, detailing, categories or for subheadings

**6.0 Timber Decay**

**6.1 Dry Rot**

**6.2 Wet Rot**

**6.3 Woodworm**

.**But do not write the whole report using a list format.**

* **Paragraph use**

Make sure the points that follow the opening sentence of the paragraph link to the lead sentence.

**If individual stones have decayed beyond repair they may be removed and replaced. Mortar can also be re-pointed if the erosion is not in full depth, although a combination of both defects may require the stalk to be dismantled and reconstructed.**

* **Acronyms**

The use of Acronyms is allowed provided that the first time you write the letters you also write the words out in full:

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: DEFRA**

* **Writing numbers in the text**

Small numbers( under ten) are usually written in full: longer numbers are given in figures:

*Three types of fabrication processes….*

*There are 34 pieces of legislation referring to*

* **Use appropriate link words**

This is to show the relationship of information.

**Although the majority of clauses and obligations within a lease are essential**

**Common writing problems in reports**

* + **Being too general and vague, be specific**

Do not use

**Everyone agrees that** ……………….

While this may be true, you can only make such statements if supported by evidence. Remember the first time an organisation is used then the name must be written out in full.

**According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, 2010) the role of Rural Champions has assisted in ………..**

If you cannot support the argument you should be cautious:

**However, The Commission for Rural Communities (2010) points out that …..**

* + Avoid wordiness and padding which makes the meaning unclear

Both companies will have to forecast the changes in the environment before it becomes an unmitigated threat and use the information to develop a robust strategy to ensure a degree of competitive advantage.

The average sentence length is 21-25 words long. Overlong, complicated sentences obscure meaning in reports.

* + **Avoid overtones of approval or disapproval:**

**It was obvious that that staff were operating successfully…**

**Unfortunately, I was given no instruction….**

**This made it impossible for me to function…**

These statements are loaded with overtones of disapproval, which can damage the objectivity of your work.

* + **Do not address the reader directly or use rhetorical questions**

**Does this mean that some strategies are better than others?**

* + **Avoid abbreviations and contractions**

*they’re* for *they are* and *etc/ i.e. doesn’t and don’t* ……………..