# Technical Report Writing Video Transcript

# slide 2

The aim of this vidcast is to explain how to plan a detailed technical report, and how to structure and write such a report. The first part of the workshop outlines the introductory sections and illustrates the order of the report, explaining some of the terminology used.

The vidcast continues by explaining the information that is required in the literature review and gives some suggestions of how to apply critical and reflective reading. The next section includes the spec, methodology and discussion and then the vidcast leads on to the conclusion and recommendations.

Finally the workshop will explain the importance of correct referencing throughout the report and how to apply the references at the end of the technical report.

Please note that this is a guide and your course work may not require all of the sections.

# slide 3

This is an example of the terms that may be used in a technical report. Obviously every academic programmewill have its own conventions, so please ensure that you read your module guidelines to ensure that you are applying the correct protocols. The terms used in this vidcast are generic so you may wish to use specific ones that relate to your topic. Remember though that your external examiner should be able to understand the terms too, so that they can find their way round your report.

# slide 4

Some academic programmes actually specify the maximum number of words that should be used in a title. Try to aim for a short title that gives the reader a clear indication of the content. It is important because you want to engage the reader from the beginning. The title page should include the title of the report, the information required by the academic school such as name of the course, matriculation number, the year, the title of the project and often a total word count is noted at the bottom of the page.

# slide 5

A technical report’s abstract briefly summarises the main aspects of the report, the methods employed, the major results and the conclusions from these results. In essence your reader should be able to read your abstract and have a good overview of your work. Your academic school will probably specify the total number of words for your abstract, this slide has suggested 250 words, but please check with your academic school and or supervisor.

# Slide 6

It is polite to acknowledge the help from your supervisor and any help that you have received from within and outside of the university. If you decide to put in a personal message thanking your immediate others for their support, please make it brief, this is not an Oscar winning production.

The contents page must be logical, remember your internal and even more importantly the external examiner is not familiar with your work; they therefore need to find their way round your report easily. Make sure everything is labelled and that pages link correctly.

# Slide 7

The nomenclature refers to any specialist terms that you may have used in the report. Some students use a glossary of terms instead. If you do use this the glossary of terms, should appear at the back of the report just before the references.

# Slide 8 and 9

These two slides link in that the first slide gives the subheading of Introduction. The non technical reader should be able to understand the introduction. This section is usually approximately 10% of the total word count and I a major section of your report. A strong introduction sets the scene and should capture the reader ‘s interest. The introduction should include the aims and objectives of the report. Often students find it helpful to break down the objectives and one method that is often used is applying SMART Objectives. The next slide illustrates how these smart objectives are linked. The objectives should be measurable in that they are specific, measurable, attainable or achievable, realistic and timebound in that they can be achieved in the time allocated for producing your report.

# Slide 10

The project should also justify to your reader why this project has been selected. Why is of interest. You may wish to specify the market, and or the audience or clients. Finish the introductory section by clearly stating the hypothesis or research question to be discussed.

# Slide 11

The literature section is a very important section of the report. This section acknowledges the pre-existing work and indicates where your project slots in. It is helpful for the reader if this section commences with the project or design specification. You should briefly indicate the approach that has been taken in carrying out your research, whether it was primary and or secondary research: whether specialist search engines were used and or specialist journals. If you used site visits and or interviews, you should also include this information.

It is useful for the reader to know how useful this information was , for example did you decide to only refer to a certain time frame or a specific client group. Why did you decide to do this? Do not just explain what you did, justify the approach that you have taken. By justifying this means not writing a description, instead consider the writer’s views and where is the evidence to support these views/ and or results.

# Slide 12

The next slide suggests particular information you may want to note down.

# Slide 13

This slide is self assessment of your skills when abstracting information for literature. If you feel you need help in any of the areas, then why not contact the Effective Learning Service for an appointment or the Academic Link Librarians. Contact details for both groups are given on the last slide.

# Slide 14 and 15

The next two slides give some suggestions of different ways to read printed documents. There is an example of SQQR - refer to picture saved

# Slide 16

It is important that you summarise the main points, remember you are representing the writer’s thoughts. So you must ensure that this is carried out accurately and that you have referenced clearly the sources of your information.

Please note that your reader will not be as familiar with your work as you the writer is, so ensure that the content can be clearly understood by the reader.

# Slide 17

This slide emphasises the importance of checking over your notes. Have you accurately represented the original sources?

The most important aspect is that your literature review should be relevant to your project. Your work’s origins originate in somewhere else. Where are the links? Why is this information in the literature review relevant to your project.

# Slide 18

Remember before you read the literature to have a series of questions, if you cannot think of any precise ones, perhaps the general questions this slide suggests will help. Your reader will judge the relevance of your comments on the supporting evidence from your literature review. Try and imagine you are justifying this project to an employer for a budget. Do you have sufficient evidence to support your proposal?

# Slide 19

A brief but essential section, although it is only 5% of your word count, this reminds your reader why your project specification is exciting, innovative, individual, an improvement on existing work.

# Slide 20

The design section is a major section in that it is 15% of the word count. This sit her time when you need to sell your idea to the reader. You should be able to justify and explain your design using appropriate language, in that it should include technical language that is appropriate to your programme. Remember to include all the aspects associated with your design. Use subheadings to guide the reader. If you are using tables, and graphs or pictures; consider the size of these; would they be better if they were in appendices? Do they add or detract from your explanations.

Evaluate and justify the strengths and weaknesses of your design as compared to the literature. Importantly explain how you overcame the weaknesses or coped with them. It may be that you lost some important details or you were behind in the project, how did you overcome this and have you detailed this in your log?

# Slide 21

This slide explains the new technology that you are using, again although there is some description, it is expected that you are justifying and supporting the technology that is being applied. This section has 10% of your word count. Explain the technology’s benefits, the industry standards that are being adopted and acknowledged and the advantages of this technology.

Likewise if you are not adopting particular standards, why is that? Is it because of the client group? Or financial constraints or time? Or some other reasons? At the end of this section you should produce a design that is ready to be applied.

# Slide 22

This slide again is a shorter one in that it is covers the implementation stage . This is your storyboard section of the project and most of it should appear in the appendices. However the report should refer to the storyboards

# Slide 23

As part of your evaluation, it is expected that you will carry out some type of testing of your design/ product/concept etc. How did this happen ? Did you ask fellow students or professionals or the public? What did you do? did you use interviews? Questionnaires and or lab tests? Where is the evidence of the testing? Completed evidence should be shown in your appendices. Remember to also clearly label these and relate to appendices in your report.

# Slide 24

Examiners and employers are especially interested in how you overcame barriers in your project and how you reflected upon the process. There are some questions for you to consider in the slide. You may find it easier to answer the questions, or you may wish to approach it using a reflective model as illustrated in the next slide.

# Slide 26 and 27

These slides are self explanatory but they are both free standing in that your examiner should be able to read the conclusion and recommendations and clearly understand both sections without referring to the rest of the project.

# Slide 28

Why not use the programme refworks for your referencing. Referencing is essential, if you do not reference you will be accused of plagiarism. If you unsure why you need to cite or reference please refer to the university guidelines on plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offence and in extreme cases you may be put off the course.

For more guidance on referencing please look at your Academic School’s guidelines which should be on Blackboard and or our guidelines which are available in an online guide You may also choose to use the data base Refworks, for more information on that database which does your referencing electronically for you, please go the library website or visit our guidelines in the Learning Development Centre’s website.

# Slide 29

There a number of common problems that appear in students’ writing. These include incorrect referencing in the text and in the references at the end of the essay. Why not type your references in the text in a different colour and check that they are correct before you submit the essay. Remember of course to change the colour back to black before submitting. If you are unsure about how to complete your references at the end of the essay please check your Academic programme’s guidelines.

Your lecturer may give feedback saying that there is too much descriptive writing and little analysis. This means that you are explaining too much about the theories or studies and not comparing or critically reviewing these.

your mark can be strongly affected by your style of writing, try to vary your use of language, use a thesaurus and a or a dictionary to expand your vocabulary. Watch the length of your sentences, if they are too short then use some linking words. On the other hand if your sentence has too many clauses, then it can be difficult for your reader to follow your argument or discussion.

Try not to use too many quotations. Your lecturer wants you to paraphrase, this means writing using your own words but always stating your source. If you do decide to use a quote, then it should be short and relevant.

# Slide 30

Remember to reference all of your ideas, otherwise this is plagiarism. Try and avoid everyday or casual language such ‘ this was done to the patient. ‘ When you are writing course work at university, there is an expectation by your lecturer that you will apply the appropriate terminology that is used on your course. When you read journal articles you will have noticed that they are written in formal language and your course work should also reflect that style.

Try to be specific in your writing if you use phrases such as ‘ many authors’ several authors’ your lecturer will almost certainly expect a n umber of references to be listed. Plus can you provide evidence that there are a number of authors? Have you truly reflected the authors’ meanings and intentions?

It is easy for a lecturer to identify when you are merely filling the essay with words or descriptive writing, this is referred to as padding.

So in essence a good quality report should be cautious in its tone as you are supporting or suggesting a concept/ idea/ intervention but you are not giving the absolute answer. Your ideas have all been referenced with evidence and are written in a coherent and interesting style.