Report structure

There is more than one correct way to write a report so you must do as your instructions state. This fact sheet will provide information on how to write a longer, formal report, but you can adapt the format to fit your requirements.

Title page

The title should tell the reader what to expect. The title page should also have the date the report was completed and a writer’s name or identification number.

Contents

A longer report needs a contents page. This is needed so that the reader can go to a specific area of the report easily.

Abstract

Abstracts are only needed for longer reports. An abstract provides a short summary of the whole content. It is read to check if the report is relevant or not.

Introduction

All reports should have an introduction. The introduction tells the reader what to expect and puts the investigation into context.

Aims and objectives

All reports should have aims and objectives. You should have a clear statement about the purpose of your study (aims) and how you are going to achieve those aims (objectives). State what you are trying to achieve and how you will achieve it. This is a crucial part of the report as it will be judged on whether your aims and objectives have been achieved.

Literature review

This section informs the reader of the current thinking in your topic. It will place your research in context and show how you are building upon previous knowledge. This should also highlight any areas of contention. Ensure you cite your sources of information and reference your work.

Research methodology

Research methodology is important because if you undertake an inappropriate methodology your results and findings will be disputed. The reader needs to know what you did to find out information so they can make a judgement about the suitability of your methodology.

In this section you explain what you have done to achieve your aims, what you did to find information you need and why you did it.

This section can be quite long, if you have done a lot of primary research, for example.
Ethical issues

You may be expected to include a section on ethical issues, such as:

- How will you store information safely?
- How will you ensure confidentiality?
- If you are contacting people, who are those people, what will be the impact of your research on them?
- Are you researching anything that may be personal?

This list provides only a few examples of the ethical factors which may be applicable.

Results and findings

This section can sometimes be merged with discussion and analysis section.

It tells the reader what you have found out from your investigation. It is objective and factual. You may include tables and graphs, but also need explain the results in words. Any raw data should be included as an appendix.

Discussion and analysis

This covers the interpretations of the results and provides a discussion about the results.

It should answer questions such as:

- What has your investigation shown?
- Did it achieve its objectives?
- What theory/literature does it support or contradict?
- What are the most plausible explanations of your findings?
- Are there any possible criticisms of the investigation?

The discussion should also:

- Build on the material in the introduction and literature review
- Evaluate the adequacy of your methodology
- Suggest design features that may have affected the results
- Include whether the results would be different under different conditions

Conclusions & recommendations

You should always provide a conclusion. Use your findings and analysis to draw your conclusions and to support any recommendations you want to make. If you are expected to make recommendations, you put these here also. You may recommend that further investigation is undertaken. This is particularly important if you realise that there are gaps in your methodology or anomalies in your findings. Alternatively, you may advise that other actions be considered.

Reference list

Every report should include a reference list which tells the reader what secondary research you have included.

Appendices

If you have any appendices you attach them to the end of the report.

Please remember - this factsheet has provided guidance on how they can be structured. However, your faculty may have specific requirements. If so, use the information on this fact sheet and adapt it to ensure the format required is produced.