Report Writing

What is a report?

A report is a written presentation of factual information based on an investigation or research. Reports form the basis for solving problems or making decisions, often in the subjects of business and the sciences. The length of reports varies; there are short memorandum (memo) reports and long reports. Most often you will be asked to write a long report.

An effective report is:

- Clear, concise and accurate
- Easy for the audience to understand
- Appropriate for the audience
- Well organised with clear section headings

Report structure:

Reports follow a standardised format. This allows the reader to find the information easily and focus on specific areas.

Most reports follow the following structure, but *please examine your assignment question and marking guide carefully, as the format and terminology required in your report may vary from this guide. If so, check with your tutor. Please check your marking guide to determine the word limit and how marks are allocated to each section.*

A Report must have:	A Report must also contain:
1. Title page 2. Table of Contents 3. Abstract or Executive Summary 4. Introduction (or Terms of Reference and Procedure) 5. Findings 6. Conclusions 7. Recommendations 8. References (See next page for details on these sections)	1. Cover letter 2. Bibliography 3. Glossary 4. Appendices

The table on the next page summarises the main headings used in reports and outlines the purpose of each section.

Please note: Further headings or subheadings may be used depending on the report's content, and these are specific to the individual report.

Section	Purpose
Title Page (Not part of the word count)	Gives the title of the report, the student name/number, the name of the person the report is being submitted to, and the completion date.
Table of Contents (Not part of the word count)	Shows the sections of the report. Gives the headings, subheadings and page numbers.
Abstract or Executive Summary	Gives a summary of the whole report. Outlines the report's purpose, methodology, findings, main conclusions and recommendations. Mainly written in past tense, and prepared last.
Terms of Reference	Briefly states the purpose and scope of the report. This includes who requested the report, the main issues or problems to be identified, the reason for undertaking the report and the due date of the report.
Procedure	Outlines the methods used to collect information e.g. interviews, questionnaires, observations and/or research.
Introduction (May be used instead of the Terms of Reference and Procedure.)	Outlines the context, background and purpose of the report. Defines terms and sets limits of the investigation. The reader/audience can easily identify what the report is about, how information was gathered, and why the report is needed. Mainly uses past tense and can be written last – but is presented first.
Findings For this section, avoid using the headings "Findings". Instead, create headings and sub-headings that identify the main issues or problems.	Present what was found during the research or investigation. Give the facts only – no interpretation by the writer of the report. Tables, graphs or diagrams can be used. Must be relevant to the issues and problems identified in the Terms of Reference. Arranged in a logical order with headings and sub-headings.
Conclusions	Analyse, interpret and evaluate the findings. Discuss and draw together different parts of the findings. Relate to relevant theories and concepts. (Your assignment might require you to refer to the findings of other studies). The major conclusions come first. Relate directly to the objectives set out in the Terms of Reference or Introduction. Follow logically from the facts in the Findings. The conclusions you draw must be complete enough on which to base your recommendations.
Recommendations (Note: not all reports give recommendations)	The opinions of the writer of the report about possible changes intended to improve a situation, or solutions to the problems. Specify who should take action, what should be done, when and how the changes or solutions should be implemented.
References (Not part of the word count)	A list of the sources that are used in and referred to in the report. Use APA referencing style.
Bibliography (Not always required)	Lists any sources that were read for the research but were not cited in the report. (Bibliography is not included in the word count).
Appendices (Not always required)	Additional relevant information. May include interview questions, surveys, glossary etc. (Appendices are not included in the word count).

To access other useful Learning Services resources and handouts, use the StudySmart tab on the My Ara homepage – https://myara.ara.ac.nz/pages/academic-support/learning-resources.