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LCLM4001 Academic Skills (ACS)

Report Writing

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives

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Discuss

- What do you think a report is?
- Have you written a report or an essay before? If so, when, and what type of report or essay was it?

What is a report?

- A document written for a **clear purpose** and to a **particular audience**, with specific information and evidence applied to a particular problem, topic, or issue.
- Unlike an essay which usually **does not** contain headings, a report has a **clearly structured format** making use of **sections** and **headings** so that the information is ***easy to locate*** and follow.

What is a report?

- When writing a report you will usually need to **follow a brief** which provides you with instructions and guidelines.
- The report brief may outline the purpose, audience and problem or issue that your report must address, together with any specific requirements for format or structure.
- Sometimes, you might be given a template to use. If you are offered a template: **USE IT**

Academic vs. Business Reports: Expectations

Think about a report at university and what a report in a business situation might look like.

Discuss with a partner:

- Do you think there would be any differences between the two?
- What expectations might be similar for both?
- What expectations might be different between the two?
- Are there any academic skills which would help you write a business report?

Academic vs. Business Reports: Expectations

Academic Reports:

Purpose:

- Show understanding

Use of Evidence

- Lots of sources, fully referenced

Outcome

- Ends with a conclusion

Audience

- Tutor/Marker

Writing Style

- Formal, cautious, uses hedging (e.g. “suggests”, “may indicate”)

Business Reports:

Purpose:

- Help make decisions

Use of Evidence:

- Often only the most relevant information

Outcome:

- End with recommendations (what to do)

Audience:

- Manager/client/other relevant stakeholders

Writing Style:

- Clear, direct, concise, action-focused

Academic reports build an argument. Business reports lead to action.

Academic Skills Needed to Write Business Reports

- **Reading and selecting information**

Quickly identify relevant information and ignore unnecessary detail.

- **Clear written communication**

Present ideas in a simple, structured, and professional way.

- **Structuring information**

Organise writing into clear sections such as introduction, findings, and conclusion.

- **Critical thinking**

Evaluate information and explain what is most important for business decisions.

- **Using evidence**

Support points with facts, data, or examples rather than opinion.

Steps for Report Planning

1. Understand the Brief / Purpose of the Report

- What are you being asked to do?
- What type of report is it?
- What are the key requirements?

2. Brainstorm / Gather Initial Ideas

- What do you already know?
- What topics might be relevant?
- What do you think you'll need to find out?

This is *pre-research thinking*, not deep planning yet.

3. Do Your Research

- Find reliable sources
- Fill gaps in your knowledge
- Make notes and track sources

4. Plan Your Structure

- Organise your ideas logically
- If you have a template use this to help you plan what goes into which section!
- Map where your evidence will go

5. Write

- Turn your plan into full paragraphs
- Use evidence to support points
- Pomodoro Technique is very good to force you to start writing-starting can be the hardest part!

6. Edit (Drafting & Proofreading)

- Review and improve your draft
- Check clarity, flow, and structure
- Proofread (grammar, spelling, punctuation)
- Check referencing

Structuring your report

- A good structure helps your reader understand your ideas and makes your report more effective.
- Structure means **the order of your information** and the **headings/subheadings** you use to guide the reader.
- Divide your report into clear, logical sections so the reader can follow your thinking.
- You do not have a report this term. However, next term, you will have one for **Problem Solving and Solutions (PRS)**. Please use these materials next term to help you with this report!

How to Break Your Report Into Clear Sections

- Most reports use a simple numbering system to show how the information is organised.

Main sections use whole numbers:

1, 2, 3, 4

(Each one is a big idea.)

Sub-sections use decimal numbers:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3

(These explain parts of the big idea in section 1.)

Smaller sub-sections can be added **if needed**:

1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3

- This numbering helps the reader see how all the ideas fit together and makes your report easy to follow.
- **NOTE:** Not all reports need sub-sections or sub-sub sections! It depends on the complexity of your topic and report. Next term, you will be given a template which helps you section your PRS report. Use it!

Title page

- Should briefly and clearly describe the purpose of the report. Other details you may include could be your name, the date and for whom the report is written.



The image shows a title page template for an Academic Skills Report. It features the University of Wales Trinity Saint David logo in the top left corner. The title 'Academic Skills Report' is centered. Below the title, there are labels for 'Name:', 'Student ID:', 'Module Code:', 'Module:', and 'Lecturer:' listed vertically. At the bottom right, there is a label 'Submitted on:'.

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Trinity Saint David

Academic Skills Report

Name:
Student ID:
Module Code:
Module:
Lecturer:

Submitted on:

TIP: If you don't know what your module code is, what your lecturer's name is, or how to spell it, LOOK IT UP! It will be on Moodle or on your timetable!

Table of Contents

The contents page should list the different sections and/or headings together with the page numbers. It:

- should be presented in such a way that the reader can quickly scan the list of headings and locate a particular part of the report.
- number section headings and subheadings in addition to providing page references.
- use a consistent numbering system throughout.
- Should include the page the references will appear on (ALWAYS their own page)
- Tip: You will need to **UPDATE** your TOC after you have finished writing and editing and are ready to submit. If given a **template** it usually already has the headings in a TOC for you.

Table of Contents Example

(Example only: NOT A REPORT TOPIC YOU WILL DO THIS YEAR)

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
2.	Motivation	4
2.1	Intrinsic Motivation	4
2.2	Extrinsic Motivation	5
3	Importance of Motivation	5
3.1	Importance of Motivation at University	6
3.2	Importance of Motivation at Work	6
4	Techniques for Motivation	7
5	Conclusion	8
6	References	7

Updating Your Table of Contents

1. Locate the table of contents (This is usually at the beginning of the document.)
2. Right-click (or use menu options) on the table of contents
3. In Word: Right-click the TOC → "Update Field"
4. Choose the type of update
 - Update page numbers only – if you haven't changed headings but the content length changed.
 - Update entire table – if you've added, removed, or renamed headings.
5. Confirm the update, Click "OK" (Word)
6. Verify
7. Check that all headings and page numbers are correct.

Update Table of Contents

Select one of the following options:

- ☐ Update page numbers only
- ☒ Update entire table

Cancel

OK

Table of Contents ▼

Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction	3
2 [INSERT YOUR ROLE HERE] in the Health and Social Care Field	3
2.1 Description of [INSERT YOUR ROLE HERE] in Health and Social Care	3
2.2 Explanation of Most Significant Skills Needed for [INSERT YOUR ROLE HERE] in Health and Social Care.....	3
3 Strategies for Skill Improvement for [INSERT YOUR ROLE HERE]	4
3.1 Three Strategies to Improve the Skills for [INSERT YOUR ROLE HERE]	4
4 Conclusion	4
1.5 Reference List.....	5

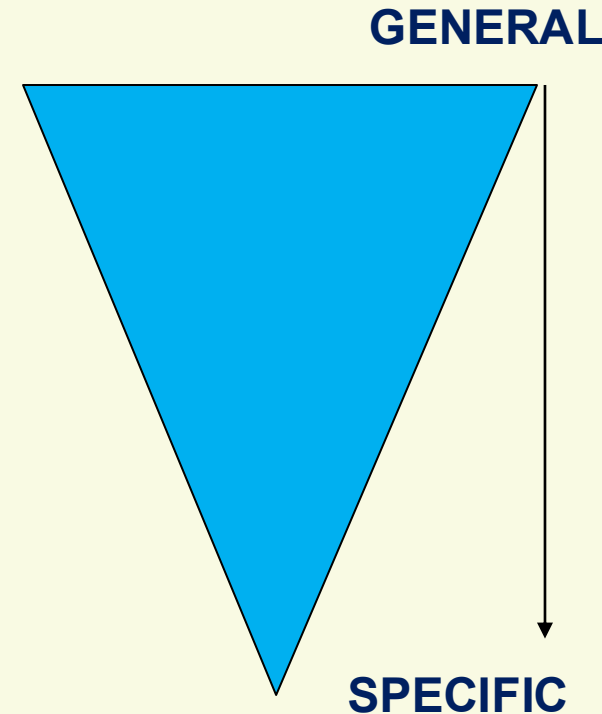
Introductions

In pairs / small groups, discuss the following:

1. Why is an **introductory section** important in a piece of writing? How does it help the readers?
2. What do you think should go in an **introduction**? What is the **purpose** of each sentence/part in an introduction?
3. What **%** of the whole work should an introduction be?

Introduction

- Comes **AFTER** the Table of Contents
- Should give the context and scope of the report/essay
- 5-10%, but as you increase in level you can play with this a little!
- States your report /essay objectives clearly
- Gives a brief general background to the subject of the report
- In an essay, it should inform the reader of your overall argument (thesis statement) near the end of the introduction.



Introductory paragraph

An introductory paragraph contains:

1. Opening sentence
2. Background details
3. Statement of aims
4. Outline



It moves from **general** to **specific**

Opening Statement/Sentence

- The first sentence of the introductory paragraph introduces the topic/theme to the readers.
- It helps readers know what the topic is.
- It should be quite general.
- It should NOT be something like "This report will discuss..." (this comes at the end of your introduction!)

For example:

Topic: Report on important academic skills

Opening statement/sentence :

There are many essential skills students in higher education need to learn and use.

Opening Statement/Sentence

Can you come up with an opening sentence for this topic?
(Please note, this is an **EXAMPLE** topic, **NOT** the same topic as your assessment)

Topic: Report on the importance of technology for students at university

Opening statement/sentence examples :

- 1) The use of technology continues to develop so that it is vital in many different areas of life.**
- 2) Technology is a central part of how people live and work, and students are no exception**
- 3) As technology continues to advance, it influences life in diverse ways.**

Background details

- With this part the writer gives a few more details on the topic.
- These do **not** need to be extensive! Only offer the details the reader must know to understand your essay or report.
- If your introduction is only 100-150 words long, your background details do NOT need to be extensive!
- These can sometimes include **definitions** or **key concepts/terms** (if needed), sometimes it might include a little information (e.g. **important dates** or **facts**) on the topic.

Background Details: **EXAMPLE**

Please note, this example is NOT on a topic you need to write about this year.

EXAMPLE Topic: Report on the importance of technology for students at university. The opening sentence is in bright blue.

Technology continues to play an increasingly significant role in various aspects of daily life. Nowadays, technology is particularly significant in the life of a university student. Over the years, the use of technology by university students has increased (Smith, 2021), resulting in a need for students to understand how to use technology in order to succeed at school (Baker, 2023). It is highly unlikely that technology will not offer a solution to a university student's problem, whether it is related to the subject they are studying, working on assignments, student union, researching, reading materials or academic support.

As you see above, the writer has moved from **general** in the beginning to **more specific** towards the end. They have provided some basic examples of technology at university, without yet specifying which aspects of technology at university they will explore.

Statement of aims and outline

- A **statement of aims** states the **main idea** of the entire essay or report.
- A statement of aims also uses appropriate **signposting language** such as:
The main ideas discussed in this work are...
This work will describe, evaluate and analyse...

Example:

- 1) **This report will look at the significance of technology for students at university.**

The statement of aims may also indicate the **organisation** of the essay. This **outline** can be written as a separate sentence, or combined within the statement of aims as 2) does.

- 2) **This report will explore the importance of technology for university students by first examining the impact of technology on lesson delivery and materials, and then by demonstrating the way in which technology facilitates support for students in their studies. Finally, it will suggest the ways in which students' use of technology will continue to develop.**

WORKSHEET

With a partner, decide which of the below Introduction is the opening sentence, background details, statement of aims, and outline. Imagine this is a report about the importance of motivation for a university student.

Opening sentence?

Background details?

Statement of Aims?

Outline?

Motivation plays a role in many aspects of life, from maintaining hobbies to success in the workplace. Motivation is particularly crucial in determining a university student's academic success and overall well-being. University life comes with challenges such as academic pressure, time management, and personal responsibilities, making motivation essential for staying engaged and performing well. Both intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and growth (Smith, 2018), and extrinsic motivation, influenced by grades and career goals (Smith, 2018), contribute to student success. This report explores the significance of motivation in university, its impact on academic achievement and mental health, and strategies for sustaining it. It will define motivation, examine its effects on performance, and suggest practical ways for students and educators to foster a motivating learning environment.

Worksheet Answer

Topic: Importance of Motivation for University Students

Motivation plays a role in many aspects of life, from maintaining hobbies to success in the workplace. Motivation is particularly crucial in determining a university student's academic success and overall well-being. University life comes with challenges such as academic pressure, time management, and personal responsibilities, making motivation essential for staying engaged and performing well. Both intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and growth (Smith, 2018), and extrinsic motivation, influenced by grades and career goals (Smith, 2018), contribute to student success. This report explores the significance of motivation in university, its impact on academic achievement and mental health, and strategies for sustaining it. It will define motivation, examine its effects on performance, and suggest practical ways for students and educators to foster a motivating learning environment.

Opening sentence
Statement of Aims

Background details
Outline

Activity 2

- Go to the worksheet and complete **Activity 2** with a partner.

Activity 2 Answers

- **Introduction A is weaker and Introduction B is stronger.**

Why is **Introduction A weaker**?:

- Most of all: the **structure is very disorganised**-it starts with the report's aim **which should be towards the end of the introduction** and switches to background details, then **back** to a (sort-of) outline, then back to background details (when it explains what the methods are)
- It **doesn't** give a **clear outline** so that the reader understands what will be discussed first, second, third, etc.
- It uses "I" and other personal pronouns, even though it is **not** a reflective report
- It does not provide a citation for the definition
- It is overly vague with its background details ("Time management is very significant in the workplace for many reasons ") remember: *general* does not mean *vague*!

Activity 2 Answers Continued

Why is **Introduction B** stronger?:

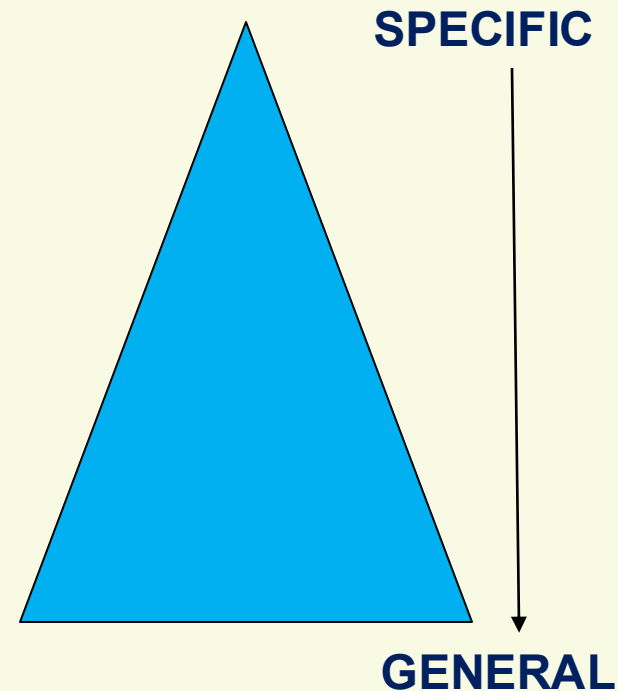
- It has a clear **opening statement** which does not immediately give all the report's arguments
- It provides a cited definition of time management and a few background details for the reader to understand a little bit more about the topic so that when they read the arguments they have a little more **context** to understand the body of the report.
- It gives a **clear statement of aims and outline**, so the reader understands what the report is trying to achieve overall, how it's going to achieve this, and the order it is going to achieve this in.

Introductions: Please note

- Your teachers will not necessarily be looking at your introductions and deducting points if you don't have a strong opening statement (for example).
- The elements discussed are a guide, to help you in the earlier stages of your academic writing career.
- There will be (good) exceptions to these rules, but for now, it is suggested that you try to structure your introductions (e.g. in your Term 2 PRS Report) as guided in this lesson.

Conclusion

- Shows/summarises the overall significance of what has been covered.
- May remind the reader of the most important points that have been made in the report or highlight what you consider to be the most central issues or findings.
- Usually moves from specific to the report or essay into a more general context.
- **No new material should be introduced in the conclusion. This includes any citations, because you should not be including any new ideas which need support.**



Conclusion Continued

- A conclusion can have many components.
- Like introductions, the complexity and length of a conclusion depends on the complexity and length of a topic/report.

Although **there may be other components**, the main parts for MOST (if not all) conclusions are:

Restate the Objective of the Report

- This summarises the main point(s) of the report

Summarise Main Points

- Briefly recap the core findings or points discussed in the report, reinforcing the main takeaways without rehashing every detail, or repeating parts word for word

Include a Final Thought or Closing Statement

- End with a strong, concise statement that reinforces the importance of the topic or suggests a final takeaway for the reader.
- This can be a call to action, or a thought-provoking insight to leave a lasting impression.

Activity 3

- Go to **Activity 3** and complete it with a partner

Activity 3 Answer

Recap of objective

summary of main points

final, more general thought

In conclusion, effective time management is essential for both individual employees and the overall success of a company. As this report has shown, time management not only helps employees improve their personal productivity and well-being but also contributes to the efficiency and performance of the organization as a whole. The Pomodoro Technique and the Eisenhower Matrix are two practical methods that can support better time management practices, offering employees clear strategies to prioritize tasks and focus on what matters most. Ultimately, adopting effective time management practices can lead to improved outcomes in the workplace, but it is up to individuals and organizations to make this a priority in order to thrive in an increasingly fast-paced world.

Activity 4

- Go to **Activity 4** and complete the activity with a partner

Activity 4 Answers

Conclusion B is the weaker conclusion

Conclusion A is the stronger conclusion

Why? Conclusion B is weaker because:

- Vague
- Lacks clear structure
- Ends by restating points made in the report rather than offering a broader, reflective thought.
- It also includes an overly general citation.
- Although we haven't read the report attached to the conclusion, we can guess that new information might have been added given the reader has included a citation-new information should NOT be added to a conclusion

Reference list

- This comes last in your report on **its own separate page** after the conclusion. It should be titled "References"
- It is important that you give precise details of all the work by other authors which has been referred to within the report.
- References should be listed in alphabetical order of the authors' names.
- **USE THE MATERIALS WE PROVIDE YOU WITH IN WEEK 3 (that's right, they are for Term 2 and 3 and beyond!).**
- Do not write your references without referring to a guide. You can use Cite Them Right, you can use the Powerpoint materials from Week 3, you can even GOOGLE 'Harvard Referencing Website' or 'Harvard Referencing Book' at worst, but please make sure you are following **some sort of guidance** and providing **complete** references.
- A list of links and nothing else is NOT a reference list.

Further Reading list

- Gravett, S. (1998) *The Right Way to Write Reports*, Kingswood: Right Way
- Heritage, K. (1997) *Report Writing in a Week*, London: Hodder & Stoughton
- Robinson, Z., Pedley-Smith, S. (2010) *A Student's Guide to Writing Business Reports*, Wokingham: Kaplan
- University of Leicester (2023) *Writing reports* Available at: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/reports> (Accessed: 15th of June 2023)