Report Writing

Writing reports is a skill that is increasingly required of most professionals. There are many formats for reports. Described in this document is the format that is required for this course. The following are the sections a report should contain.

1. Executive Summary. This is a short description of the purpose, scope, along with the conclusions or recommendations of the report. It should be short and contain no details of the analysis, although the methodology employed should be mentioned. Tables and graphs may be presented here for visual impact. The content should be non-technical and addressed at a general audience. Since this is a summary, it should not be much more than a page, not including graphs or tables.

2. Introduction. In this section, the problem, the data and other aspects of the project are more fully explained.

3. Analysis. The modelling and analysis is presented in this section. Mathematical details and detailed computer output that may detract from the flow of the presentation should be saved for the appendices.

4. Conclusion. This section contains detailed conclusions as well as weaknesses of the analysis, and perhaps suggestions for improvement.

5. Appendices. Details that distract the reader from the main thrust of the report are put here. In addition, details of the analysis may also be present here for reference by an interested reader.

Important

1. In the main body of the report, only relevant figure and tables should be included, and these should be then discussed in the report. Other figures and tables may be put in the appendix for reference.

2. Label figures and tables for ease of reference.

3. Think carefully of how to present figures and tables. In particular, think about axes and scales of graphs, and whether the information can be presented better in some other way. Remember, the main purpose of figures is visual impact, illustrating important features of data and analysis and summarising information.

Not all reports need to have all these sections, and some reports may have other sections besides those discussed here. A sample outline report is available online (and also given out as a handout) to further illustrate these ideas.