

## WelTec/Whitireia Writing Series

# Sections of a Report

### Executive Summary (Abstract)

An executive summary provides a quick overview of a report. It should include the following information:

- the purpose of the report
- the methods used to conduct the research
- the result of the research
- the conclusions drawn from the research
- recommendations for future actions.

The executive summary/abstract is generally written last because it is difficult to summarise your report before you have written it!

### Introduction

A good introduction is important in a report. It should give the reader all the information required to understand the importance and relevance of the report. It should describe:

- the context of the report
- the purpose of the report
- the basic structure of the report
- the limitations of the report.

Unlike an executive summary an introduction does not include information about the results, conclusions or recommendations of the report. Instead, it is supposed to tell the reader the background to the report and why it was written.

Some business reports use a simple introduction that begins with *'This aim of this report is to...'*. It's also common to state exactly who the report was written for with *'This report was commissioned by...'*. Talk to your tutor to see if there is a particular template they want you to use for your report.

### Sample executive summary

The purpose of this report was to research the effect of high fibre diets on weight loss in male students. Fifty three male students were interviewed regarding their dietary behaviour and weight loss over 2015. The students were weighed three times throughout 2015, and asked to keep a 'Diet Diary'. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of male students lost weight if they stuck to the prescribed high fibre diet. The report concludes that high fibre diets are an aid to weight loss. It is recommended that the institute develops guidelines which would support male students in the use of high fibre diets to ensure that they maintain a healthy weight.

### Sample introduction

There has been a great increase in the weight of New Zealand male students over the past five years. There is an indication that this has had a poor effect on their health and ability to complete courses. Indeed, the average increase in the weight of male students seems to follow this pattern and seems to be closely related to the numbers of chippies sold in the cafe. Recently a number of teaching staff have proposed that an institution-wide weight loss plan be developed and implemented for male students. This report will discuss some of the literature regarding weight loss, the data collection methods used and the results of a pilot study conducted with a sample of male students, which researches whether the use of a high fibre diet has an effect on weight loss.

# Sections of a Report

## Discussion

The discussion section of a report is the body of your report. It's where you discuss and interpret the results and themes of your research. It's also where you discuss the connection between your results to other research that you found. In summary, your discussion section should:

- be divided into different sections using logical subheadings
- in each section you should discuss your findings
- incorporate research using APA referencing
- add visual elements (e.g. tables, diagrams or pictures) to support your discussion if needed.

## Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the main findings of the report. No new information should be put in a conclusion.

### Sample conclusion

The student use of high fibre diets has clearly contributed to the recorded weight loss. The study highlights how diet not only contributes to student health but also student academic results. The fact that the majority of students not only lost weight but also had improved academic results suggests that appropriate guidelines and policies are a necessary component in the institute's policy mix.

## Recommendations

The recommendations section suggests suitable actions, outcomes, changes or solutions to the problem(s) identified in the research. It's common to include the phrase '*It is recommended that...*' and to use bullet points to introduce your recommendations. You should also use tentative language to make recommendations, words such as *should*, *could* or *may* are appropriate.

### Sample recommendations

It is recommended that the institute develops official guidelines regarding the use of high fibre diets amongst their student cohort. The guidelines should recommend:

- Students be made aware of the research results connecting high fibre diets to weight loss.
- Students be made aware of the research results connecting high fibre diets to academic success.
- Students be inducted into the use of high fibre diets as part of their orientation.
- Finally, the guidelines need to be polytechnic-wide and communicated to all staff and students.