

WelTec/Whitireia Writing Series

Writing an academic report

What is a report?

A report is a piece of writing that identifies and examines in detail a particular topic. At WelTec you might be asked to write a report to better understand a particular economic, scientific or social problem or to present the findings of a research project. There are three rules to writing a report that are important to keep in mind:

- A report is written for a clear purpose and audience.
- A report has a clear structure and format with headings and subheadings so the information is easy to locate and follow.
- A report must include an introduction, research and evidence and conclusions.

The structure of a report

Below is a list of the common sections of a report. You will not always need to incorporate all these sections into your report so check your assignment brief and marking guide to see which sections your tutor expects you to include.

Section	Content
Title page	On this page include the name of the course, the name of the report, the course code, your name and ID number and the name of your tutor. You may be asked to include a word count.
Table of contents	This page shows the headings and subheadings within the report.
Executive Summary/Abstract	This is a summary of the whole report. It should briefly describe the purpose, findings, main conclusions and recommendations in the report.
Introduction	This section outlines the purpose, context, background and limitations of the report.
Literature Review	This is a review of what has already been written about the topic. It is only common in longer research reports.
Methodology or procedure i.e. Observations/surveys	This section explains how the research was conducted and how the data was collected and analysed. It is not always necessary.
Findings and discussion Primary and secondary findings	This section has many names but essentially it is the body of your report. This is where you present your findings under relevant subheadings and discuss them with reference to the literature. You might also include graphic forms (e.g. tables and graphs) with labels/captions.
Conclusions	This is where you briefly summarise what was found and its significance. No new information should be introduced here.
Recommendations	If your report is investigating an issue, this section is when you suggest suitable changes or possible solutions to the problem.
References (And bibliography if requested)	Full details of all references used in the report. Use the APA 6 th referencing style.
Appendices	This is where you attach additional supporting information (e.g. raw data, surveys, questionnaires, a glossary, etc.)

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Report Writing Process

Step 1: Read the assignment brief carefully

Look closely at the assignment brief and marking guide. Check that you understand the meaning of every word in the brief. Remember a report is written for a particular audience so think carefully about the type of information your audience is looking for.



Step 2: Brainstorm

Write down what you know about the topic. You may want to use the mind map format.

Don't worry about whether your ideas are great at this stage – just get your thoughts flowing!



Step 3: Do your research

Now you should have some key words you can use to begin your research.

Use course materials, textbooks, credible websites, and online databases like Google Scholar and EBSCOhost.

If you need to do primary research, this is the time to do it. Make sure to record your findings carefully.



Step 4: Take relevant and useful notes

Practice *skimming* and *scanning* to read useful texts found in your research.

Don't forget to make note of the full APA reference for each source you take notes from.



Step 5: Make a report outline

Look at your brief and marking guide to know which main headings you need to include and then based on your ideas and research work out which subheadings you want to create.

Now under each subheading start to jot down the ideas and key words you want to include in that section. Create tables or diagrams if they will help you to more clearly display your information.



Step 6: Write, revise, edit, repeat!

Convert your notes into logical, flowing paragraphs. Try writing your discussion and conclusion sections before your introduction, recommendations or executive summary.

When you have finished writing, read over your work and edit it as needed. Make sure to include APA in-text citations and a complete reference list.



Step 7: Hand it in!

When you are confident in your work, read it carefully and compare it to the marking schedule. Have you answered all parts of the assignment brief? Have you included all the necessary sections? If so, hand it in!



Interested in developing your writing?

Visit the Learning Commons to see a Learning Advisor or pick up the other handouts in the **WelTec Writing Series**.