Writing Assignment #5
Short Report to a Decision-maker

Summary of assignment

- **Task:** You will write a report that does the following:
  - defines a problem persuasively and accurately
  - proposes a solution to the problem *to a decision-maker or group of decision-makers* who can implement the recommendation

- **Topic:** You will choose a problem in your workplace or your community

- **Length:** 1400-1600 words

- **Citing Sources:** You will not cite any sources in this paper except interviews or surveys you conduct through primary research. For this reason, you will not list any sources at the end of your report.
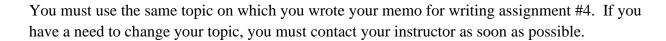 - Instructions on citing an interview in APA format

  Please note that you can conduct your primary research virtually. If the current COVID-19 pandemic precludes you from speaking with individuals face-to-face or from visiting sites in-person, you may conduct research such as interviews or surveys by email or by phone. Please contact your instructor with any questions you might have about conducting primary research in the current situation.

- **Formatting the Report:** You will need to insert a running head and page numbers into the report in APA format.

- **Writing Process:** You will submit a first draft of the report to the assignment folder. The first draft will be given comments by the instructor. After receiving comments from the instructor, you will submit a revised draft. The final draft will be graded.

  If you do not submit a second draft, the first draft will be graded.

- **Components of the report:**
  - title page
  - memo to the decision-maker (app. 80-120 words)
  - executive summary (app. 150-200 words)
  - table of contents
  - introduction (app. 100-200 words)
  - discussion (app. 900-1100 words)
  - conclusions (app. 75-100 words)
  - recommendations (app. 100-200 words)

Topic Selection:

You must use the same topic on which you wrote your memo for writing assignment #4. If you have a need to change your topic, you must contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Details on the Different Parts of the Assignment

Title Page

The following image shows the format you should follow for your title page:

Title of Report

[Your Name/Course]

[Your Professor's Name]

Submitted by:

[Your Name]

Memo to the Decision-maker

In your memo, you will include the headings

The following screen capture shows a format you can follow for your memo.

Memorandum

DATE: 19 January, 2010

TO: Cheryl Bryant, Director
Recycling Programme
Office of Associated Students

FROM: Alan Christopher, OAS Business Senator

SUBJECT: Increasing participation in West Coast College's
recycling programme

Here is the report you requested on 11 December 2009. It relates to the status of West Coast College's recycling programme. This report gives recommendations for increasing awareness and use of the recycling programme. It incorporates both primary and secondary research. The primary research focused on a survey of members of the West Coast College campus community.

(Give purpose of the report)

Although the campus recycling programme is progressing well, the information gathered shows that with more effort we should be able to increase participation and achieve our goal of setting an excellent example for both students and the local community. Recommendations for increasing campus participation in the programme include educating potential users about the programme and making recycling on campus easy.

(Indicate future actions)

I am grateful to my business communication class for helping me develop a questionnaire, for pilot testing it, and for distributing it to the campus community. Their enthusiasm and support contributed greatly to the success of this OAS research project.

(Acknowledge any assistance)

Please telephone me if you would like additional information. I would be happy to implement some of the recommendations in this report by developing promotional materials for the recycling campaign.

Executive Summary

The executive summary should be a stand-alone document. In other words, if a reader were to read only your executive summary, the reader would have a good understanding of the problem you are writing about and the solution you are proposing to that problem. In this report, your executive summary should be 150-200 words.

The following image shows the format you should follow for your executive summary. Please keep in mind that this executive summary is about 260 words in length, so it is longer than the one you will write. However, it provides a guide for how you can approach your executive summary.

Executive summary

Purpose and method of this report

West Coast's recycling programme was created to fulfil the College's social responsibility as an educational institution as well as to meet the demand of legislation requiring individuals and organisations to recycle. The purposes of this report are to:

- determine the amount of awareness of the campus recycling programme
- recommend ways to increase participation in the programme.

We conducted a questionnaire survey to learn about the campus community's recycling habits and to assess participation in the current recycling programme. A total of 220 individuals responded to the survey. Since West Coast College's recycling programme includes only aluminium, glass, paper, and plastic, these were the only materials considered in this study.

Tell purpose of the report and briefly describe the research

Findings and conclusions

Most survey respondents recognised the importance of recycling and stated that they recycle aluminium, glass, paper, and plastic on a regular basis either at home or work. However, most respondents displayed a low level of awareness of the on-campus programme. Many of the respondents were unfamiliar with the location of the bins around campus and, therefore, had not participated in the recycling programme. Other responses indicated that the bins were not conveniently located.

The results of this study show that more effort is needed to increase participation in the campus recycling programme.

Give conclusion/s of report

Recommendations for increasing recycling participation

Recommendations for increasing participation in the programme include:

- relocating the recycling bins for greater visibility
- developing incentive programmes to gain the participation of individuals and on-campus student groups
- training student volunteers to give on-campus presentations explaining the need for recycling and the benefits of using the recycling programme
- increasing advertising about the programme.

Give report recommendations
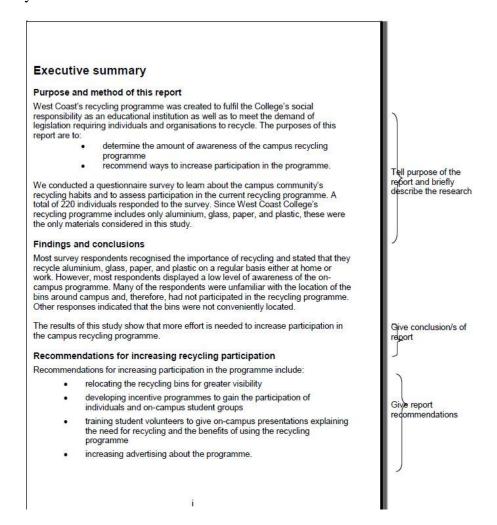
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Screen capture from Victoria Business School. "Writing a Business Report,"
https://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/teaching/resources/VBS-Report-Writing-Guide-2017.pdf

Table of Contents

This [video](#) shows how to create your table of contents.

Introduction

In your introduction, you will tell your decision-maker what problem the report is analyzing. It will do the following

- describe the context of the work or community situation
- describe the problem being analyzed in that business or community situation
- state the questions your report will answer
- define any terms, if necessary

Discussion

The discussion area is the main part of your report. In this section, you will provide evidence of the problem and justify your recommendations. You will need to be clear, thorough, and persuasive.

The following examples demonstrate the need for clarity, thoroughness, and persuasiveness:

- If you are writing a report recommending that your company allow teleworking, you do not want to write a few sentences about how teleworking is convenient. You want to quote some co-workers you have interviewed about how teleworking will benefit them.
- If you are writing a report recommending that your company move from Google mail to Outlook, you do not want a few sentences on how good Outlook is. You want to show some screen captures of Google mail to demonstrate that it is awkward, is cumbersome, or has inconvenient features. You also want to show some screen captures of Outlook to demonstrate that it does not feature these shortcomings and improves upon these problems.
- If you are writing a report recommending that a sidewalk be repaired in your neighborhood, you do not want a few sentences describing why sidewalks should be smooth. You want to show some photographs of the sidewalk that is in disrepair, demonstrating why its current state is unsafe, unsightly, or otherwise undesired.
- If you are writing a report recommending that your local high school repair parts of its football field, you do not want a few sentences describing the value of athletics for high school students. You want to show some photographs demonstrating where the field needs to be repaired, quote individuals that you have interviewed on the problems with the field now, etc.

Notice that in all four examples listed above, *primary research* was included. Interviews with co-workers or individuals in the community, screen captures of software applications, or photographs of the neighborhood or the football field all represent primary research. Such research adds to the persuasiveness of the report.

Without this type of evidence, the report is not thorough and lacks persuasiveness. The decision-maker will not be persuaded that the problem you are outlining is an actual problem unless you can demonstrate that it is an actual problem in the context.

Moreover, in the discussion, you describe, in paragraph form, your conclusions and your recommendations. You need to explain why you have come to these conclusions and why you are making these specific recommendations.

Conclusions

In the *Conclusions* section, you take an *objective* stance. You <u>summarize the findings</u> of your research <u>without putting your own opinion</u> into the analysis.

In your conclusion, you will do the following:

- summarize your findings
- connect your findings to the problem you have identified
- present the conclusions in parallel form
- bullet the list of conclusions

You stated your conclusion in the *Discussion* section. However, in the *Conclusions* section, you will list the conclusion concisely and succinctly in bulleted form.

Recommendations

In the recommendation, you take a *subjective* stance in the report. You <u>give your opinion</u> on how the problem should be addressed.

In your recommendation, you will do the following:

- number specific steps of action you recommend in parallel form, beginning with a verb
- rank the recommendations, listing the most important recommendation first, the second most important recommendation second, etc.

Please note that this section should be brief. A busy administrator does not want to pore through long, dense paragraphs trying to locate your recommendations. The decision-maker should be able to see at a glance what your recommendations are.

You stated your recommendations in the *Discussion* section. However, in the *Recommendation* section, you will number the recommendations concisely and succinctly.

Due Date

Your instructor will notify you of the due date. You will write a first draft, your instructor will comment on the first draft, and you will submit a second draft using the comments as your guide.

Guides to Help You in Writing this Assignment:

- [Victoria University of Wellington](#)
- [Writing Effective Short Reports](#)
- [Report Writing](#) by Massey University

Submitting the assignment:

You will submit a first draft of the essay to the assignment folder. The first draft will not be graded. The instructor will provide comments to it.

After receiving comments from the instructor, you will submit a revised draft. The final draft will be graded.