FAQs
Academic Reports

What reports are common at UWA
- **Design report** – design problem and proposed solution
- **Investigative report** – topic of investigation and answers
- **Lab or field report** - laboratory or field experiment and results
- **Research report** – topic of research and findings
- **Progress report** – the status of a project and future directions

Why write an academic report
- To investigate a problem, question, experiment, topic or project
- To identify solutions, answers, results, findings or future directions

How to prepare an academic report
1. Identify the reason for the report
2. Gather information
3. Analyse and evaluate the information
4. Organise and write your ideas in a logical and coherent way

What structure to use
A simple way to structure a report is to move from
- Problem to solution (design report)
- Question to answers (investigative report)
- Experimental procedures and methods to results (lab or field report)
- Topic to findings (research report)
- Project status to future directions (progress report)

A report may look like this

**Typical questions**

**Introductory paragraph**
What is the purpose of the report? What is the background to the report? What does the report cover?

**Body paragraphs**
What is known about the problem, question, experiment, topic or project? What solutions, answers, results, findings or future directions have you come up with?

**Concluding paragraph**
What conclusions can be drawn? What is the significance of these conclusions? What should be done next?

**Typical language**

**Introductory paragraph**
This report ….

**Body paragraphs**
Language and structure will vary. It is best to divide this section into a number of subsections. Each subsection focuses on a particular aspect of the topic. Use headings and subheadings to guide the reader.

**Concluding paragraph**
In summary, while…, ….
Therefore, …
How an academic report differs from an essay
The descriptions below are tendencies rather than rules!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents and analyses information on a</td>
<td>Explores a topic in order to establish a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem, question, experiment, topic or</td>
<td>proposition or main point and convince the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project in order to identify solutions,</td>
<td>reader of the validity of this proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answers, results, findings or future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conveys information clearly and concisely</td>
<td>Expresses ideas in a fully developed and expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divides text into sections containing</td>
<td>Does not usually include sections with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>related information, includes numbers and</td>
<td>headings, but instead tends to tie ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>headings for sections, and presents sections</td>
<td>together in a logical, flowing, continuous text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a logical order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes sufficient detail for others to</td>
<td>Includes sufficient detail for others to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand and replicate the processes</td>
<td>understand and be convinced of the central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presented</td>
<td>proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a practical, applied focus</td>
<td>May be theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims to be objective</td>
<td>Can be subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May include figures and tables to convey</td>
<td>Uses text only to convey ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to incorporate critical thinking into your report
Don't just describe information, but also

- **Discuss** – consider different viewpoints and perspectives
- **Analyse** – compare, contrast and synthesise information
- **Interpret** – examine the implications and significance of information
- **Evaluate** – make judgements about information

What other parts may be included in an academic report

- **Front matter**
  - **Cover page** – contains information that identifies the report, e.g. title, student name(s) and number(s), date, unit, lecturer or tutor
  - **Executive summary** – provides an overview of the main ideas contained in the report
  - **Table of contents** – is a list of section headings and numbers with page references

- **End matter**
  - **Acknowledgements** – acknowledges those who assisted and indicates what support they provided
  - **References** – are an alphabetical listing by author's surname of sources referred to in the report
  - **Appendices** – includes material not contained in the body of the report because it is too long or complex

Using STUDY Smarter resources
This resource was developed by the STUDY Smarter team at UWA Student Services for students enrolled at the University of Western Australia.

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- Do not amend them
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UWA Student Services welcomes your feedback on the information contained in this publication and on any service provided. Please contact [study.smarter@uwa.edu.au](mailto:study.smarter@uwa.edu.au)

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