What an investigative report is
- A critical evaluation of the most relevant information on a given topic

Why write an investigative report
- To provide a background and framework for a topic of investigation
- To investigate what is known about the topic
- To examine and evaluate evidence on what is known
- To indicate gaps and grey areas in knowledge
- To link your investigation to other people’s work

How to prepare an investigative report
1. Identify the key questions you are investigating
2. Find out as much as you can about these questions by examining existing literature and talking to experts in the field
3. Evaluate the information by asking questions such as:
   - What is known on this topic and what consistent themes are there?
   - What are the gaps in the information and how can you address these gaps?
   - What divergent viewpoints are there and which of these different viewpoints are supported by the most convincing evidence?
4. Organise and write your ideas in a logical and coherent way

What structure to use
A simple way to structure an investigative report is to move from
- Key questions to answers
- Established facts to areas of ambiguity

An investigative report may look like this

Typical questions

Introductory paragraph
What does the report set out to investigate and evaluate? What key questions does it look at?

Body paragraphs
What is known about each question? What different perspectives exist? What is the evidence to support these perspectives? Which perspectives are the most convincing? Where are the gaps and grey areas?

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 investigates and evaluates…. Three key questions that pertain to this topic are...

Body paragraphs
There is widespread agreement on…. However, what is less clear is...

Concluding paragraph
In summary, while..., .... Therefore, ...
How to effectively present an investigative report
Think of the investigative report as a detailed news story. Your task is to go out and uncover as much information as you can about the topic you are investigating. To do this, you need to ask questions and consult as many relevant authoritative sources as you can. When you write your report, explain and interpret the key information you have found as clearly and succinctly as you can

- Introduce the topic of investigation and the key questions
- Answer each key question in turn as well as you can based on the evidence you have gathered, acknowledging where you obtained this evidence (make sure you reference appropriately!)
- Comment on and question the evidence you have gathered, noting consistent themes and divergent viewpoints, pointing out any gaps and grey areas, and using the most convincing evidence to support your own position
- Summarise what you have found out and highlight the significance of this information
- Suggest a way forward and what should be done next

How to incorporate critical thinking into your investigative report

- Determine what the crucial questions for the topic are
- Make informed judgements and decisions about where best to get your information
- Ask questions about what you read and hear
- Take into account the contextual factors
- Make judgements and decisions about the information gathered
- Develop a position and justify why you chose this position

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. The team would like to thank Dr Brad Stappenbelt from the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics for his input into this resource.

We are happy for our resources to be used, but we would ask that you:
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- Give credit to reference the STUDY Smarter team where necessary

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