

Formal Report Writing

What is a formal report?

- A document prepared following a fixed procedure
- Used to describe an investigation and give results and recommendations based on it.

Parts of a Formal Report

- Title
- Summary (Optional)
- Introduction
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Example of a Report

- Title
 - Should be specific
 - Convey useful information about the content of the report
 - Followed by names of authors and date it was finished

E.g.

Survey of First Year Students at University of Colombo School of Computing: 2011-2012

University Student Survey Committee,

August 11, 2013

Example of a Report...

- Summary
 - Optional
 - Briefly state
 - aim of the report
 - Describe the methodology followed
 - Group conclusions of the investigation to categories

E.g.

I. Summary

A survey of the first year students of the University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC) was carried out to identify the problems they face. Students were surveyed on several matters. Majority expressed satisfaction with the university whereas a few areas of concern were identified.

Example of a Report...

- Parts of Introduction
 - What is to be investigated
 - Who requested the report
 - When it was requested
 - What methodology is to be used (should be indicated last)
 - **Tense:** Past tense. Use present tense for aims/goals.

E.g.

2. Introduction

The main purpose of this survey is to identify ways of improving effectiveness of education for the first years of UCSC.

Example of a Report...

This report was requested by the director of UCSC on December 1st, 2012. A university student survey committee was formed, consisting of the Director, Deputy Director, Student Counselor and Registrar. The committee was asked to submit its findings by September 1st, 2013.

The committee constructed a questionnaire aiming at extracting information from the students who have been first year undergraduates within the period of 2011-2012. Copies of this questionnaire are available at the UCSC Library. A total of 112 students answered the questionnaire and out of this 100 were usable responses. 118 students were registered as first year undergraduates in 2011-2012. Hence these responses can be taken to reflect the views of a significant majority of this batch of students. The questionnaire included 20 variables categorized into 6 groups.

Example of a Report...

- Information received from UCSC before their arrival to the university
- The student's reception into the university
- The courses and lectures at UCSC
- Interaction with staff and senior students
- Learning resources
- Food and accommodation

Example of a Report...

- Findings
 - Facts discovered by using the methodology described in the introduction
 - **Tense:** Past tense. Passive voice is commonly used.

E.g.

3. Findings

3.1 Before arrival at UCSC

Students were inquired whether they have received thorough, partial or no information about UCSC, their chosen program of study and campus culture. Results suggest that sufficient information was provided on the above mentioned aspects.

Example of a Report...

3.2 After arrival at UCSC

Using a scale of unsatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied, students were asked to rate five aspects of their arrival and stay at UCSC. A considerable number of responses suggested that hostel facilities and time allocated for English lessons need improvement.

Example of a Report...

- Conclusions
 - Statements of fact derived from findings
 - **Tense:** Present Simple or Present Perfect Tense

E.g.

4. Conclusions

This survey of the first year undergraduates of UCSC within the period of 2011-2012 shows why UCSC is a destination sought by many youngsters for their higher education. However, two main concerns have been highlighted.

Example of a Report...

- 4.1 The hostel facilities provided have been insufficient..
- 4.2 Not enough teaching time has been allocated for English lessons.

Example of a Report...

- Recommendations
 - Suggestions of how the problems can be solved
 - Often contains the word, ***should***
 - Verbs with ***should*** be in ***active voice*** or ***passive voice***

E.g.

5. Recommendations

Based on the survey results, the committee makes the following recommendations.

Example of a Report...

- 5.1 The university should allocate a spacious building for hostel facilities.
- 5.2 The first year timetable should have more time allocated for English lessons

For further details:

<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/studentservices/els/pdf/MODULE%20Academic%20Report.pdf>

THE END