

WRITING A REPORT

Explanation:

Reports communicate information that has been compiled as a result of research and analysis of data and/or issues. Just like for an essay, writing a report requires a lot of processing of research and organisation of ideas.

While essays are organised around paragraphs, reports are structured into sections with headings and subheadings. These sections form the body of the report, and should be listed in a Table of Contents. The first section will be your introduction, and the last section will be the conclusion: the middle is where you will need to take the initiative to choose the organisation and flow of each section and sub-section.

Often reports are structured in a way that reflects the information finding process and the writing up of the findings: that is, summary of the contents, introduction or background, methods, results, discussion, conclusion and/or recommendations. The inclusion of recommendations is one reason why reports are a common form of writing in industry, as the informed recommendations are useful for decision making.

Inside each section, you will be expected to write in paragraphs with the same kind of referencing of research sources that you will use in an essay. However, in a report it is generally accepted to sometimes provide lists of ideas in bullet points, or to supplement the writing with visual representation of data in graphs, tables or charts.

Learning activity:

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Can you tell which report got the higher mark?

Look at the four different sample student tables of contents for reports on the same topic. Can you see how the students were structuring their ideas and material in response to the topic from the way that they organised their table of contents? Which do you think were marked as Excellent, Good, Just Pass, or Fail? Answers are at the end of this document.

Topic: Compare two International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions in two different countries.

Report A***Abstract***

1. Introduction
2. The core labour standards in the USA
 - 2.1 Definition of ILO conventions about freedom of association
 - 2.2 Freedom of association in the USA
 - 2.3 Definition of ILO convention about discrimination
 - 2.4 Discrimination in employment in the USA
3. The core labour standards in Thailand
 - 3.1 Comparing and contrasting freedom of association in USA and Thailand
 - 3.2 Comparing and contrasting Discrimination in USA and Thailand
4. Conclusion and Recommendations
5. References

Report B***Abstract***

1. Introduction
2. Freedom of Association
 - 2.1 ILO convention about freedom of association and right to organise
 - 2.2 Thailand: applicability and effectiveness of this convention
3. Discrimination in Employment
 - 3.1 ILO convention about discrimination in employment
 - 3.2 Thailand: applicability and effectiveness of this convention
4. Comparing the situation between Australia and Thailand
5. Conclusion

6. References
7. Appendix

Report C

Abstract

1. Introduction
2. The core labour standards in Thailand
 - a. Freedom of association
 - b. Discrimination
3. Comparison of core labour standards in Japan and Thailand

Report D

Abstract

1. Introduction
2. *Freedom of Association*
 - 2.1 The international convention
 - 2.1.1 Indonesia: application and effect
 - 2.1.2 Australia: application and effect
3. Discrimination in Employment:
 - 3.1 The international convention
 - 3.1.1 Indonesia: application and effect
 - 3.1.2 Australia: application and effect
4. Comparison of factors effecting application of conventions in Indonesia and Australia
5. Conclusion
6. References

Other resources:

Report writing
Unilearning, University of Wollongong
http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/report/rep_overview.html

Report writing: samples
Language and learning Online, Monash University
<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/llonline/writing/general/report/index.xml>

Answers for learning activity:

Report A: Just Pass. This is organised around countries (the report could be organised by countries or by convention, either would have been fine). All the elements are here, but the structure shows an over-focus on the USA. Additionally the 'definitions' of the UN convention fit inside the US sections, which seems to imply that the US owns the international convention – so this indicates a lack of understanding.

Report B: Good. The body sections were organised around the convention. It didn't do better because there was an over-focus on Thailand, so this is not really comparing or giving equal time to both countries. The section 4 comparison of the countries is a bit of an afterthought.

Report C: Failed! This doesn't have all the components required to address the question. The table of contents was sloppy, as was the report.

Report D: Excellent. The student chose to organise around conventions, but equal time was given to both conventions, and equal time was given to both countries. The table of contents shows a considered and thoughtful structure that was matched by the high quality of the report itself.