

# Differentiating MSVU Writing Assignments

MSVU International Education Centre

SEPTEMBER 28, 2022



# Reminder

**Today's session:  
2:00-3:00pm ADT**

**PPT will be posted to the IEC  
webpage**



# Presenter



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# Writing Assignments

Outline for today:

1. A Lab Report
2. A Literature Review
3. A Reflection
4. An Analysis or Critique
5. A Case Study



# Writing Assignments

## 1. A Lab Report



# 1. A Lab Report

## What is a lab report?

The purpose of a lab report is to document and communicate lab work and findings.

- Seen mainly in science-based courses
- Typically follows a very structured format
- Documents hypothesis, methods, findings, and analysis
- Highlights the significance of findings
- Allows for comparison
- May propose future experiments or research

# 1. A Lab Report

## Structure:

A lab report typically follows a very structured format (however, always follow your professor's preference):

- Title page - name of experiment (less than 10 words), names of lab partners, date
- Abstract – the purpose of the experiment, key findings, conclusion
- Introduction – more specific purpose with background and methodology, states hypothesis, states objective
- Methods and Materials – a list of equipment and supplies, explains procedures, notes calculations
- Analysis and Results – presents analysis, discusses data breakdown, graphs/charts/tables of results

# 1. A Lab Report

## Structure Continued:

A lab report typically follows a very structured format (however, always follow your professor's preference):

- Discussion – most important part of the report, shows deeper understanding
  - explain, interpret, connect to the purpose/aim of the experiment, highlights limitations, recommends future call to action
- Conclusion – short, precise, what were the findings/results of the lab
- References – lists literature, resources cited or referred to
- Appendices – additional significant documents or references too detailed or big to include in the report



# Writing Assignments

## 2. A Literature Review



# 2. A Literature Review

## What is a Literature Review?

A literature review:

- Discusses published information in a particular subject area, usually has an organizational pattern, and combines both synthesis and summary
- Is not only a Summary, which a recap of the important information of the source
  - a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information
- May also evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant

# 2. A Literature Review

## How is a Literature Review Different from an Essay?

### An Essay or Research Paper:

- The main focus is to develop your own argument based on reading and research and use those readings as evidence to support for your argument

### A Literature Review:

- The focus of a literature review is to summarize, synthesize, and critically analyze the arguments and ideas of others without adding new contributions

## 2. A Literature Review

### What to Do Before Writing a Literature Review:

- Clarify – if you're unsure, seek answers from your professor, know appropriate sources (ex: journal articles, books, etc)
- Find Models – find Literature Reviews to learn from, note their organization/structure, identify themes you may want to duplicate
- Narrow Your Topic – having a specific research question or thesis sentence will help reduce the number sources you need to read to get a good survey of the material
- Determine the Organization – how will you present your sources? It can be: Chronological, Thematic, Methodological, Similarities, Gaps in Research, etc.

## 2. A Literature Review

### When Writing a Literature Review:

- Use Evidence – your interpretation of content must be supported with evidence (research from scholarly sources) to prove what you are saying is valid
- Be Selective – select only the most important points and be certain it relates directly to your focus
- Summarize, Synthesize, and Critically Analyze – recap the original author's main points in your own words (summarize), find connections between authors and their ideas, and identify gaps or areas where more research is needed (synthesize + critically analyze)
- Keep Your Own Voice - while the literature review presents others' ideas, your voice (the writer's) should remain front and center. Weave the original authors' into your piece but state your own ideas and thoughts, too



# Writing Assignments

## 3. A Reflection



# 3. Reflection

## What is a Reflection?

Reflective *writing* is evidence of reflective *thinking*

In an academic context, reflective thinking usually involves:

- Looking back - at something - often an event, something that happened, but it could also be an idea or object
- Analyzing - the event or idea - thinking about it in depth and from different perspectives, and trying to explain it, often with reference to a model or theory from your subject/course
- Thinking carefully - about what the event or idea means for you and *your ongoing progress* as a learner

*“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.”*

*(Dewey, J. 1993)*



# 3. Reflection

## What is a Reflection continued?

- Reflective writing is **more personal** than other kinds of academic writing
- We all think reflectively in everyday life, but perhaps not to the **same depth** as that expected in good reflective writing at the university level

## Reflection is a key component of Experiential Learning

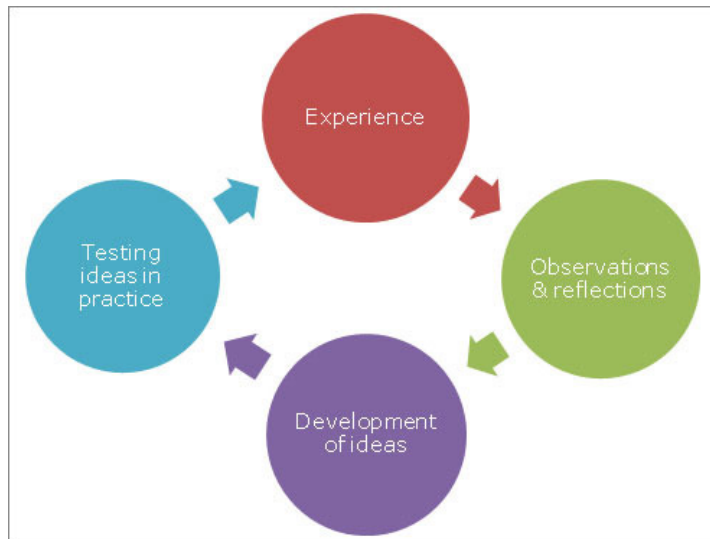


Image by Karin Kirk



# 3. Reflection

## More:

- Reflective thinking, especially if done in discussion with others, can be very 'free' and unstructured, yet still very useful
- It is an *exploration* and *explanation* of events not just a description of them
- It often involves revealing anxieties, errors and weaknesses, as well as strengths and successes
- You should select just the most *significant parts* of the event or idea. If you try to 'tell the whole story', you are likely to use up your words on description rather than interpretation
- It is useful to '*reflect forward*' to the future, in addition to '*reflecting back*' on the past

# 3. Reflection

## Structure:

In assignments that require reflective writing, professors normally expect to see carefully-structured writing which *closely follows the assignment instructions*.

- Paragraph 1: Description – What happened? What is being described?
- Paragraph 2 - Interpretation - What is most important/interesting/useful/relevant about the object, event, or idea? How can it be explained with theory? How is it similar to and different from others?
- Paragraph 3 - Outcome - What have I learned from this? What does this mean for my future?

# Writing Assignments

## 4. An Analysis or Critique



# 4. An Analysis or Critique

## What is an Analysis or Critique?

An Analysis or Critique:

- Requires the writer to closely examine another author's writing
- Most often reviews a book, journal article, or essay
- Is a personal process of understanding, followed by an evaluation, of the writing



# 4. An Analysis or Critique

## Why You May Be Assigned to do Analysis or Critique?

- To think deeply about a particular writer's research or ideas on a subject and reflect and compare them to your own
- To analyze important factors of a subject
- To analyze both the positive and negative points of a subject



# 4. An Analysis or Critique

## How to Write an Analysis of Critique?

- Read – skim and scan the text, filter and sort through the content, read the first and last paragraph of the piece carefully, identify areas of interest
- Analyze – done through critical eyes - read the title (remember the author's objective), determine author's main points, make notes, begin formulating your opinion of their work
- Write – develop your opinion of the piece, find evidence to support this, determine your structure

# 4. An Analysis or Critique

## Structure:

- Introduction – identify the author(s), the title of the piece you are evaluating, publication, year, the author's purpose or main idea of the piece, the author's Thesis Statement
- Summary – state a brief summary of the author's purpose for writing, highlight the key points of the piece with evidence, pages and proof, identify the structure of the piece
- Evaluation – a intentional analysis of the piece by section or chapter, state your analysis or critique using descriptive language and evidence, highlight the strengths or weaknesses with your reasons why with proof
- Conclusion – restate the author's purpose, summarize your thoughts and opinions, make recommendations

# Writing Assignments

## 5. A Case Study





# 5. A Case Study

## What is a Case Study?

A Case Study asks you to:

- Analyze the specific details of a problem or instance, usually in business
- Determine appropriate alternatives
- Propose solutions using supporting evidence



# 5. A Case Study

## How to Write a Case Study?

To prepare:

- Read and Analyze Critically – read with a purpose (what are the problems), highlight possible problems, make notes
- Narrow Your Focus – identify 2 to 5 problems, indicate why they are problems, state how you believe these problems can have a negative impact, note who may be responsible
- Brainstorm Possible Solutions – determine possible alternatives, reflect on past class readings and assignments, refer to real life organizations, research, map pros and cons of your ideas



# 5. A Case Study

## Structure:

- Introduction – identify key issues and problems, develop your Thesis Statement and briefly highlight your solution
- Background – state the problem in more detail, highlight important facts and issues in detail
- Evaluate – individually point out why you have identified these areas as problems with support or proof, identify what is working and not working, make comparisons
- Proposed Solutions – provide possible and realistic changes, explain why, support with proof, and make recommendations

# Writing Assignments - Review

Today we looked at:

1. A Lab Report
2. A Literature Review
3. A Reflection
4. An Analysis or Critique
5. A Case Study



# Future Webinars or Workshops

If you have any ideas for future webinars or workshops:

- Assignments you are doing in classes
- Skills you are not sure how to preform
- Academic challenges you are encountering

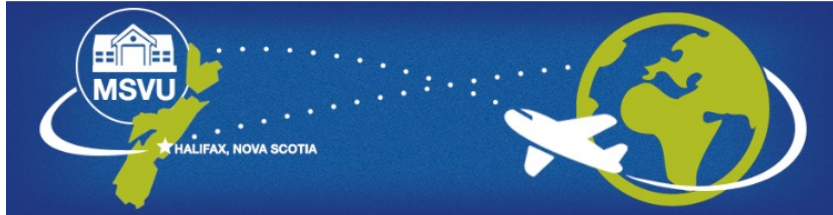
Please feel free to email me: [nicolle.bowes@msvu.ca](mailto:nicolle.bowes@msvu.ca)



# To Review This Webinar

[www.msvu.ca/international](http://www.msvu.ca/international)

## International Education Centre



The International Education Centre (IEC) at MSVU offers personal, academic, cultural and immigration advising to international students in Canada, as well as any student or faculty wishing to study, research or conduct projects abroad. The IEC is also home to the University's English for Academic Purposes programs. [Learn more about us.](#)

### FALL 2022 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

As the university transitions to in-person classes, our orientation delivery will be both online and in-person. **The in-person orientation will be hosted from Wednesday, August 31st, to Friday, September 2nd, 2022. Registration required!**

We are delivering a number of online webinars to help you get settled into your new home and to ease your academic transition to MSVU. These webinars are scheduled throughout July to August 2022.

Attend as many webinars and answer quizzes correctly for a chance to win a \$20 gift card from the MSVU bookstore.

A promotional graphic for the Fall 2022 New International Student Orientation. It features a blue background with a yellow vertical stripe on the right. The text reads: 'FALL 2022 New International Student Orientation Pre-arrival Webinar, July &amp; August, 2022'. Below this, it says 'A CHANCE TO WIN PRIZES' with two steps: 'Step 1: Register and attend pre-arrival webinars.' and 'Step 2: Complete pop quizzes after each webinar.' A gold seal with a red border contains the text '\$20 MSVU Bookstore Gift Card'.



### Traveling to Canada: COVID-19 Requirements

MSVU international students are no longer required to have their quarantine plans approved by the International Education Centre. However, you are still required to have a quarantine plan to enter Canada. Please continue to check this website as it will help you create your own quarantine plan and will prepare you for your travel to Canada.

If you need further support, please email [international@msvu.ca](mailto:international@msvu.ca).



### Pre-recorded Online Supports

We've provided a number of online support webinars and workshops that will help you in your transition to Canada. The list is a combination of academic and student life support services and information. Please continue to visit this page as we are continuously adding to the list.



Thank You!  
Questions?



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