

Differentiating MSVU Writing Assignments

MSVU International Education Centre

OCTOBER 15, 2021



Reminder

**Today's session:
10:00am - 11:00am ADT**

**PPT will be posted to MSVU
webpage**



Presenters



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Writing Assignments

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:

- 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 analysis, graphs/charts/tables of results

1. A Lab Report

Structure Continued:

A lab report typically follows a very structured format:

- 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 literatures, 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 summary and synthesis
 - A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but 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 word, find connections between authors and their ideas, and identify gaps or areas where more research is needed
- 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

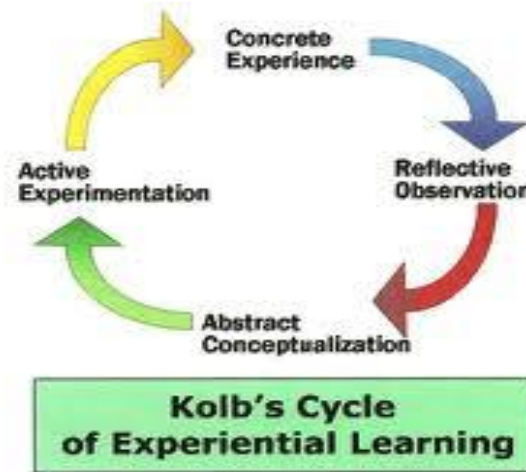
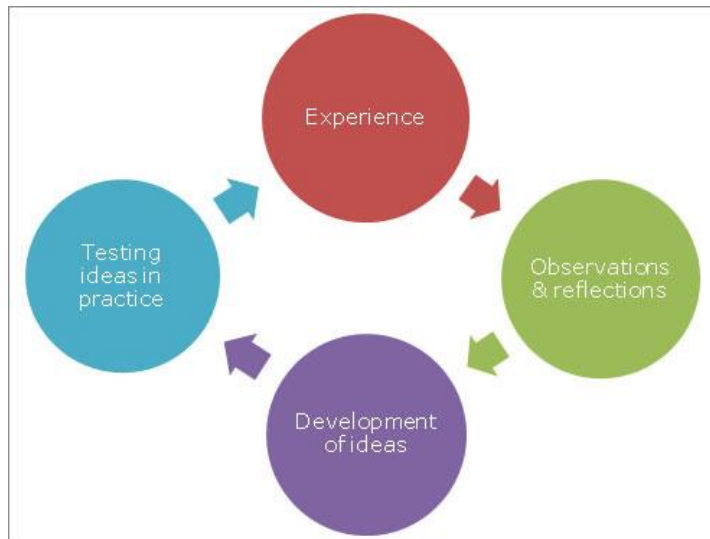


Image by Karin Kirk

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 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

Thank You!
Questions?



References

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