

# PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: FORMAL RESEARCH REPORT

## Writing and Submission Requirements

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Length: 2400 words, minimum (800 words per person)  
Format: APA or IEEE manuscript form  
Submission: Turn in to E-Learning an attached document in Word or Rich Text format (.doc or .rtf). For the electronic copy, name the file using your last name and the name of the assignment with no spaces (e.g.: SmithReport.doc).

## Assignment Prompt and Context

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Formal analytical reports are produced in academia and in many professions. Typically, these reports include an introduction, a methodology, an empirical research or data section, a discussion of the facts, and a conclusion with recommendations. For this assignment, the report must be based on empirical research the group conducts and will follow the formal guidelines presented in the text.

Responding to the scenario listed below, write a report that answers a specific research question. Your report should examine the existing scholarly literature on the subject, collect original data, present findings, and draw conclusions that answer or help to answer the question. The process of conducting empirical research includes these steps:

1. Develop a research question on a significant topic.
2. Explain how the existing literature on the subject relates to your study.
3. Design a methodology by which you can answer the question.
4. Collect data using that methodology.
5. Establish the answer to your question and examine its ramifications.

These steps correspond to the parts of the research report, which should appear in your paper:

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results (or Data)
- Conclusion

In brief, the introduction should establish the question or hypothesis and discuss the context of your work in a literature review. The methodology should precisely and accurately describe the manner by which you gather data that will answer your research question. (In business-oriented documents, the methods section may be incorporated into the introduction.) The results section should display your data logically and clearly, using graphics where appropriate. And the conclusion should analyze the results in a logical manner, explain their ramifications, discuss the limitations of the study, and define areas for further research.

Your report must also include a title page, an abstract, references, and whatever appendices are needed to support your recommendations. These elements of the report are not counted for the word requirement.

## Assignment Scenario

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In a recent speech, a Florida state legislator, Senator Techy, announced that he thought that the best way to improve higher education in the state of Florida was to improve students' access to technology. To that end, he is proposing a bill that would require the University of Florida to provide all incoming students with a free iPad. Senator Techy is proposing a two-year pilot program at UF, the flagship university in the state, with the hopes that demonstrable improvement in student retention, overall GPAs and an increase in STEM majors will make the program feasible for other state universities by 2016.

Your research firm has been hired by Senator Undecided's office to conduct research into this issue and help the Senator decide how to vote on this proposal. The Senator's office has asked your firm to develop a research project in this area that will help her not only decide how to vote, but also how to defend her decision to her constituents. The exact topic of the research project has been left up to you and your team, but you should remember to consider the following kinds of questions:

**Questions of possibility:** Are there legal, ethical or practical concerns with this project? Has this or similar projects been attempted elsewhere and were those attempts successful? How will success be measured in this project? What do the logistics of this project actually look like? Is this something that UF can actually pull off? How long would it take to set up this program? What are some of the logistical or practical concerns about this kind of project?

**Questions of economic wisdom:** Where will the money come from to fund this project and will UF have to cut other programs to afford it? How much will it cost? Is this the best use of that amount of money?

**Questions of perception:** In the current economic climate, how will the average voter respond to this proposal? Who will be pleased by this project? Who will be displeased? Are there any potential downfalls to this project? What are the pros and cons of being for this project? Against it? Ultimately, the Senator is going to want to know how this will help or hurt her chances of reelection.

**Due:** 1 report, saved as Word doc (.doc/.docx) or PDF, 2400 words total (or 800 words per student in the group).