## Excelling in Project Work
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Project work is usually an extended piece of work involving an investigation into a topic. You may need to do project work at UniSIM as part of your course work or end of course assessment. Working on projects can be time-consuming but you may find it to be a satisfying experience, because it provides an opportunity for you to do challenging and interesting work. Here are some useful tips in order to do well for your project work.

1.  Choosing a topic
    - Choose a subject or area of study which you are interested in.
    - Avoid topics about which you feel so strongly that you would find it difficult to conduct a balanced investigation.
    - Seek your instructor's feedback on the feasibility of doing an investigation into your selected topic.

2.  Planning the project
    - Plan it carefully. A project can be a huge undertaking as it involves assembling information from various sources. Apart from the collection of materials for inclusion, it requires you to write a comprehensive paper or report, which will probably be longer than any assignment you have previously undertaken.
    - Break the project down into a series of smaller tasks and activities with realistic timelines.

3.  Make regular and steady progress on your project
    - Set aside regular time for the project and stick to the assigned tasks.
    - Make use of any help available. Follow up on any useful suggestions given by your instructors or classmates. Library staff may be able to provide valuable help tracking down relevant information you need.
    - Regularly revisit the aims of your project again, to ensure that you are addressing the topic of your project. It is easy to get preoccupied with one or two particular strands, and to end up with a project, which misses many key aspects.

- Below is a general guideline that describes the components of the project report. Ensure that various stages of your investigation address these components.

| Component | Description |
|---|---|
| Cover Sheet | • Full title. Your name. Course title. Name of institution. Date. |
| Title Page | • Full title. Your name. |
| Acknowledgements | • Mention the names of all who helped materially with your work and in what way they helped, starting with your supervisor.<br>• Avoid flowery or overly emotional language. |
| Abstract / Synopsis | • A short paragraph, which briefly summarises what is in the report to allow readers to see if this is relevant to them. |
| List of Contents | • List of headings and subheadings used in your report, with page numbers.<br>• In a short piece of work this list may not be necessary. |
| Introduction | • Outlines what the report is about. May include background to the report, aims, and objectives (i.e. Why did you do this work? What was the problem you intended to investigate?).<br>• State briefly how the study is related to the work of others.<br>• Refer to things that you expect your readers to know and build on this foundation.<br>• Proceed from the general (broad subject areas) to the particular (one aspect), or from the whole to its parts.<br>• This gives your readers a framework on which to hang the information and ideas you present. |
| Literature Review | • Refer to the work of others and critically evaluate it before relating you own work to theirs, or indicating where your work fits in, in relation to it.<br>• Include this in a separate section at the end of the Introduction under a separate subheading.<br>• Or use a separate section or chapter if a more comprehensive literature review is required. |
| Materials and Methods | • What materials did you use? How did you gather your data? How did you carry out your investigation?<br>• The purpose of this section is not only to inform but also to enable the reader to replicate the work and check if similar results will be obtained. |
| Findings / Results | • State your findings simply and clearly along with the interpretation and analysis.<br>• You may include diagrams, and tables, charts or graphs to present the analysis of your data. |
| Discussions | • What do you make of your results? i.e. how do you interpret the patterns you see in your data? How do they relate to the work of others –especially those mentioned in your Introduction/Literature review.<br>• Do not express opinions as if they were facts.<br>• Avoid expressing other people's opinions or ideas as if they were your own.<br>• Make sure you always acknowledge your sources, if you make reference to other people's ideas. |
| Conclusions | • Your conclusions should follow logically from your Results and Discussion sections. Are you able to answer any of the questions raised in your Introduction?<br>• Summarise your findings.<br>• Be sure to include anything that is original, any contribution that is important to the subject and anything else that you particularly want your examiners to know.<br>• At the end of this section you may list a set of Recommendations under this subheading. |
| List of References | • In your Introduction, Materials and methods and Discussion sections cite publications that you have consulted.<br>• And in your List of References, give full bibliographical details for every publication cited but for no others. |
| Appendices | • Tables of data that are summarized in your Results section may be included in an Appendix.<br>• Appendices might also include other relevant material that would be out of place in the main body of your report.<br>• Avoid using the Appendices as a dumping ground for shoving in all kinds of unrelated material, however. |

4. <u>Writing up the project report</u>

- Get an early draft. The more time you have to work on your draft version, the more you can improve on it.

- Put each draft away for a while. When you return to it days later, you are able to read it in an objective way –similar to the way your examiner will be reading it – and you are likely to find a number of important changes you can make.

- Seek feedback from people who can give you critical comments. At the end of the day, you can decide which critical comments you are going to heed.

- Submit your report on time or a little early.

- Ask yourself if your report satisfies the general criteria for assessing project work shown below if you are ready to submit it.

    - How adequate is the data I have gathered?

    - How thorough is my analysis of the data?

    - How accurate and insightful is my interpretation of the results?

    - How much initiative and originality does my project reflect?

    - How successful have I been in relating my findings to the work of others?

    - How effective have I been in critically evaluating the work of others?

    - How effective have I been in selecting relevant material and presenting this in a clear, concise and well-organized report?

I hope that with this guide to help you break down a big project into its component parts, you will feel less overwhelmed when tackling your project work, or end-of-course assessment.