

# Authentic Assessment

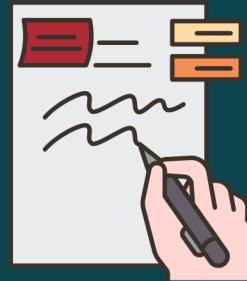
## Written Report



## DEFINITION

A written report presents readers with detailed content - including key information, a critical analysis and/or interpretations of such information, as well as recommendations - on a particular topic or issue. It typically involves research, data analysis, or the results of an experiment or investigation.

The structure of a written report usually consists of different key sections, which can include the abstract, introduction, methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The type of report used differs by discipline (e.g., analytical reports in business or practical laboratory reports in science). The format, as well as the writing style of a report, are likewise also discipline-specific.



## HOW DOES IT WORK?

To design a written report assessment, teachers should take the following steps:

1. Inform students of the learning objectives of the written report assessment.
2. Decide on the report format that students should follow, and make these expectations clear.
3. Inform students of the elements to be included in the written report, as well as how they should structure the report.
4. Provide students with a report checklist to help them check and ensure that all the essential components and content are included in their report.
5. Introduce and ensure that students understand the assessment criteria of the written report.
6. Offer timely feedback to students for further improvements (e.g., encourage or require students to submit their drafts before the final report is handed in).

## BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

### Benefits

- Students' abilities and techniques in collecting, analyzing, and reporting data can be developed.
- Writing reports allow students to practice and demonstrate their abilities in drawing appropriate/strong conclusions, as well as in suggesting relevant recommendations based on the results of experiments or their investigations.
- Students' writing skills can be enhanced.
- Different levels of cognitive knowledge can be assessed.

### Challenges

- Students typically need to carry out data collection and analysis before writing their report; it is thus a time-consuming assessment task for them.
- Reports produced by students may be biased. For example, students may only report positive or supporting results and experiences on the given topic.

## CASE SAMPLE

### Written report assessment from the group project in the module, English for Academic Purposes, in PolyU

#### Design of the assessment:

At the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), written reports were used as an assessment in a module titled 'English for Academic Purposes', offered by the English Department for first-year undergraduate students. The module taught discipline-specific content.

Three classes of electrical engineering first-year students completed a group project that consisted of three assessment tasks: a seminar, an oral presentation, and a written report. The project accounted for 40% of the overall grade for the module. All three of the aforementioned tasks incorporated both peer and teacher assessments. Students of these classes were trained beforehand in providing peer evaluations for oral and written assignments, using provided assessment criteria.

### How are students assessed?

The assessment criteria of the written report, which were all equally weighted, had seven criteria: (1) preparation, (2) content, (3) organization, (4) writing style, (5) layout, (6) presentation, and (7) language. For each, students were evaluated on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest mark achievable.

While the seminar and oral presentation components of the project were individually assessed, students were assessed on the written report as a group. Marks given by teachers and students (to their peers) were weighted equally.

#### Reference

Cheng, W., & Warren, M. (1999). Peer and teacher assessment of the oral and written tasks of a group project. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 24(3), 301-314.

## TIPS FOR DESIGNING

- If grammar and language are part of the written report's marking criteria, it must be clearly specified to students.
- Teachers should remind students that definitions of technical terms should be provided so that even readers unfamiliar with the topic can understand the content.

