

## Writing Guidelines for 15.301 Group Project Reports

The specifications for your report given to you by your instructors cover the important elements of content that you need to consider in writing your reports. The writing staff will take these specifications into account when we read your work.

Here are some additional guidelines on format and writing that we will expect you to follow.

### I. ORGANIZATION AND WRITING

- Make sure content appears in the appropriate section.
- Make sure your report is coherent overall—each section should link to the next, and each paragraph should link logically to the next paragraph.
- Within paragraphs, sentences should be linked to each other logically.
- Language should be clear, concise and precise.
- Tone should be consistent, and not too chatty, casual or jargony.
- Grammar and syntax (sentence structure) should be correct.
- Your report should be free of misspellings and typos.

### II. FORMAT: General

- Follow APA style for general format and citations.
- Include a Title page with group names, TA and section time, and date.
- Include a Table of Contents and a References page.
- Use section headings as given to you—Introduction, Literature Review, etc.—and number sections, thus:
  1. Introduction
  2. Literature Review . . .

\* Note that Table of Contents and References are not numbered.

- In APA style, the title page is p. 1. All pages include a running title—a 1-2 –word version of your title—along with the page number.
- Don't start a new page for each section.
- Don't leave section headings “orphaned” at the bottom of the page.

### III. FORMAT: Citation

Even if the only work you cite is a textbook, *do* cite, using APA style for both in-text citation and your References page.

Note that conversation and correspondence with TAs, professors and others may be cited, or you may include Acknowledgements before your References if you want to acknowledge particular help in understanding a point. For example:

#### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Prof. Mary Smith for help with understanding the concept of altruism.

(more)

#### **IV. FORMAT: Figures and Tables**

- All figures and tables must be referred to in your text *before* they appear on the page. As a rule, figures and tables should appear on the same page or the next page as the text that refers to them.
- All figures and tables need captions. Captions go *below* figures and *above* tables.
- Captions should not just be labels but should draw readers' attention to what you want them to notice.
- If you borrow a figure from a text, make sure to credit it in your caption.
- Label graphs and charts with consistent units and consistent size type.
- Don't wrap text around figures and tables. It's not a good use of your time, and often leads to hard-to-read columns of text. Instead, center figures where they fall on the page.
- Do aim to keep comparable material in comparable formats of comparable size.