Style Guide

PROFESSIONAL PROJECT REPORT
Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The *Professional Report* is expected to be an informative and persuasive planning document. Both the contents and presentation require careful attention. An effective report is well organized, clearly and concisely written, and potentially supported by statistics and graphics. Graphics – which may include photographs, plans and diagrams, charts and graphs, or tables – should be integrated within the body of the report (rather than placed in an appendix).

Length and Format: The *Report* should be a professional-style* document with a maximum length of 3,500 words (for the Introduction, Main Body of the Report, and Conclusions and/or Recommendations – i.e., sections 5, 6, and 7 of the Sample Outline).

- Manuscripts may be single- or double-spaced; if the document is single-spaced, paragraphs should be placed flush left and separated by a single line space.
- Widows or orphans (single lines of text at the top or bottom of the page) should be avoided.
- Continuous pagination is required from the executive summary through the end of the report.
- Provide "breathing room" between text and any included graphics.
- Choose font sizes and types (e.g., Arial, Palatino, Times New Roman) to enhance legibility.

Tables and Figures: Tables and figures should be integrated into the text and clearly titled, labeled, and sourced.

Titles for Tables
Placed above and even with the left-edge of the table.
Example: *Table 1. Projected Daily Maximum Traffic Volumes for the University Avenue corridor, Madison, Wisconsin.*

Titles for Figures
Placed below and even with the left-edge of the figure.
Example: *Figure 1. Existing Land Uses in the City of Madison's Design District #7.*

Source lines
Appear below the label of all tables, charts, maps, and figures. The source line is smaller type (e.g., 10-point), italicized, and left-justified.
Example: *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.*

Notes: If notes are included, use them sparingly, keep them brief, and number them sequentially. Place the list of notes at the end of the text, not as footnotes on each page.

* Examples of "professional-style" reports are posted on the web at: http://urpl.wisc.edu/people/lagro/courses.php (see pdf's under URPL 601 and URPL 912).

January 2011

Sample Outline

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1. Cover
Title, graphic (e.g., photo or map, as appropriate), student's name, date, and affiliation.

2. Table of Contents

3. List of Tables and Figures

4. Executive Summary
Reviews the problem the report addresses (1-2 sentences), purpose of the research or planning effort (2-4 sentences), methods employed (1-2 sentences), key findings or results (1-2 sentences), and conclusions and/or recommendations (2-3 sentences). The summary should not exceed 250 words.

5. Introduction
A brief problem statement, summary of the project objectives, community and/or regional context, and significance of the planning or policy issue.

6. Main Body of the Report
Typically, includes multiple headings and sub-headings to organize the Report and enhance its clarity. Addresses data sources and limitations, methods of analysis, and results or findings.

7. Conclusions and/or Recommendations
Summary, interpretations, and planning, design, and/or policy recommendations.

8. References or Bibliography
The Chicago Manual of Style offers two basic documentation systems: (1) notes and bibliography and (2) author-date and references. The notes and bibliography style is preferred by many in the humanities, including those in literature, history, and the arts. This style presents bibliographic information in notes (foot and/or end) and, often, a bibliography. The author-date system is preferred by many in the physical, natural, and social sciences. This style cites sources within the text, usually in parentheses, by author's last name and date of publication. Full bibliographic information for each citation is provided in a list of references at the end of the document.
For examples and further guidance, see: www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

9. Appendices
An appendix is not required. In some cases, however, an appendix can provide useful additional project information (e.g., the project's survey instrument, or questionnaire).

Guidelines

The student presents and defends the Professional Project Report to a two-member faculty committee. The student's advisor will serve as the lead member of the examining committee. The student will be expected to make a coherent and logical presentation, using appropriate presentation methods, and respond effectively to questions. The presentation of the Professional Project is expected to last about 20 minutes, and no longer than 30 minutes, followed by questions from the faculty committee and others in attendance. The presentation of the Professional Project Report will be open to the campus community. Committee deliberations after the presentation will be in closed session.

Design Guidelines

Design principles - or rules of thumb - can help you create a professional project poster that not only looks good, but communicates effectively, and even memorably. Adobe Illustrator and InDesign are graphics software packages that are well-suited for poster design, but other programs (e.g., PowerPoint) can work, too. As you begin your poster project, be sure to consider the following page-setup issues:

1. **Size** – Poster size requirements are a function of available display space and the expected number of posters. For the Professional Project Poster, the required size is 36 inches (vertical) x 48 inches (horizontal). Set these dimensions before laying out the poster.
2. **Orientation** – Poster orientation should be "Landscape" or horizontal (see dimensions above).
3. **File size** – To keep file sizes reasonable (e.g., 25 MB or smaller, for easy uploading), pay attention to image resolution (DPI – dots-per-inch of 300 DPI should be adequate for printing).

To tell your "story" clearly and concisely, here are four key design issues to consider:

1. **Graphics** (e.g., diagrams, maps, photos, icons [1] & graphs - bar/line/pie) – "a picture is worth a thousand words," so use graphics to reduce text & communicate more clearly; graphics should occupy at least 30% (and up to 50-60%) of the poster's surface area.
2. **Lettering hierarchy** – use at least 3-5 different font sizes: very large (100 pt) for titles, large (40-70 pt) for headings & sub-headings, medium (20-24 pt) for bullet lists & other text blocks, & small (14 pt or smaller) for references, etc.; color fonts [2] can help to accentuate headings & sub-headings; sans-serif fonts are best, especially for titles and headings.
3. **Text short-cuts** – bullet lists & tables convey key information concisely – from 5-6 feet away – and help to eliminate "text-heavy" sections on the poster.
4. **Layout** - there should be a logical, typically left-to-right & top-to-bottom flow to the information (e.g., title, objectives, methods, results, implications or recommendations); the poster should be "balanced" (horizontally & vertically) & not crowded (e.g., use "white" space for margins & to give each element its own space; a unifying color palette – for graphics, text, and accents – can enhance the poster's visual appeal.

Campus resources on poster design include:

The DesignLab: https://designlab.wisc.edu/
The Writing Lab: https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PosterPresentations.html

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[1] See, for example, *Icons for Everything*: https://thenounproject.com/
[2] See, for example, Adobe Color Palettes: https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel/