ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS II
VG2023
COURSE OUTLINE

1.   Introduction

This course is designed for students who have successfully completed VG2013. It is to equip them with the necessary communication skills for occupational purposes.

2   Objectives

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- interact in a variety of business - related situations (persuasion, negotiation skills)
- write an effective business report.
- give an effective business presentation
- handle business correspondence

3.   Course Content/Description

3.1   Business Correspondence (Sales Letter)

Students will learn to apply practical psychology in persuasion and sales in order to write 'catchy' sales letters.

3.2   Language of Negotiation

Students will be involved in simulated negotiations.   The strategies include opening the negotiations, exploring the positions, influencing the level of understanding, establishing the bargaining zone, bargaining and setting.

3.3   Selling

Students will learn basic selling process and strategies e.g. established rapport, handling objections and closing the deal.   They will also participate in a simulation.

3.4 Report Writing

It provides students with the necessary writing skills in effective report writing. There will be a combination of lectures, exercises and group discussions. Students will also be taken through the writing process and be involved in a writing project. Students' work will be evaluated and they will be encouraged to provide constructive feedback.

3.5 Oral Presentation

Students will learn how to give an effective presentation for a specific purpose (report) and audience. It will also focus on the aim of the presentation, the audience, the introduction, the body of the presentation; the conclusion and the recommendations and the use of visuals. It also includes factors in delivery.

3.6 Reading Text

3.6.1 Students will be exposed to text which are authentic and are preceded by a pre-reading task designed to make the task more readily accessible.

3.6.2 Language Practice

The majority of the language tasks relate to the preceding text. They provide contextualised practice in the specific areas.

3.6.3 Listening

The listening material consists of recorded interviews with business people in well-known companies or with specialists in a particular field. Students are asked to apply what they hear to a different but related task.

3.7 Final Examination

4. Contact Hours

Four (4) hours per week inclusive of occasional conferencing hours.

5. Course Assessment.

5.1 Business Report Writing

Conferencing 1	5%
Conferencing 2	5%
Final Report	10%

5.4	Negotiation	20%
5.5	Class Participation	5%

- ñ discussions
- ñ attendance
- ñ assignment
- ñ attitude

5.6	Final Exam	30%
	Report Writing (Short Schematic Report)	15%
	Sales Letter	15%
	Total	100%

6. Text

David Cotton. 1993. Business Class. London. Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

- Selected units only (Refer to course schedule) ignore writing section.

7. References

7.1 Charanjit S. Nee Gurchan: Linden Foo-Vargish 1987. English For Occupational Purposes. Singapore : Federal Publications.

7.2 Colin-James Graham 1989. The Complete Asian Report Writer. Singapore: Times book International.

7.3 Colin-James Graham 1986. The Complete Asian Letter Writer. Singapore: The Book International.

7.4 Brian Howe-Visitron. 1985. The Language of Meeting and Negotiations. UK : Longman.

7.5 York Associates. The York Training Packs. Effective Presentations.

VG 2023
COURSE SCHEDULE SESSION 1999/2000

Week \ Period	1	2
1 24th May	Course Briefing : Instructors	Introduction Course Matters Ice Breakers Report Writing : Introduction
2 31st May	REPORT WRITING Briefing, theory, Introduction, Background	
3 7th June	Discussion of Report Topics	Report Writing Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations
4 14th June	Report Writing : Language	SELLING & Theory
5 21st June	SELLING & MOCK	SELLING & Preparation
6 28th June	Report Writing : CONFERENCE 1 Content	
7 5th July	EVALUATION : SELLING	
11 July 17 July	MID SEMESTER BREAK	
8 19th July	SALES LETTER	UNIT 6 Pan European Advertising
9 26th July	SALES LETTER	UNIT 4 Presentations
10 2nd August	Report Writing : CONFERENCING 2 Language	
11 9th August	Video : York Associates Oral Presentation Language Input	UNIT 7 Negotiations
12 16th August	Negotiations & MOCK	Negotiations (cont'd) Video : Visitron Preparation For Evaluation
13 23rd August	EVALUATION ORAL PRESENTATION : REPORT	
14 30th August	EVALUATION NEGOTIATIONS	

235

EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: Personal Particulars

1. Position : _____ 2. Department: _____
3. Academic qualification : _____
4. Professional qualification : _____
5. No. of years with company: _____
6. Present designation & length of service : _____
7. Previous designation & length of service : _____
8. Present job demands : _____

SECTION 2: Report Writing Activities

1. Which type of reports do you find to be most relevant to your job? Please rank them in terms of which is most relevant (1) to least relevant (5). Allocate the same number for reports that you think are equally relevant.
(please refer to a definition of each in appendix as reference)

    1.1 Informational [   ]

    Which type of informational report is frequently written? Please rank the following according to most frequent (1) to least frequent.

    a. Progress   [   ]   c. Operational   [   ]   e. Other_____
    b. Status   [   ]   d. Annual   [   ]

    1.2 Analytical   [   ]

    Which type of analytical report is frequently written? Please rank the following according to most frequent (1) to least frequent (5).

    a. Problem-solving   [   ]   c. Policy review   [   ]   e. Other_____
    b. Market research   [   ]   d. Corporate Planning [   ]

    1.3 Feasibility Study   [   ]

    1.4 Proposal   [   ]

2. Please indicate how much time you devote to the following activities for reports, in general. Please tick where applicable.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Half of the time	Little of the time	None
2.1 Reading reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2 Writing reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3 Listening to report presentations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4 Editing reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.5 Assisting others in writing reports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.6 Carrying out research (for writing reports)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 3: Report Writing Skills

1. In your opinion, is good Report Writing skills an important or necessary factor in your field?

   [   ]   Yes   [   ]   No   [   ]   Not sure

2. What contribution would good Report Writing ability make to the following area in your organisation? Please tick where applicable.

   Very Important   Important   Quite Important   Insignificant

   a. job recruitment
   b. staff appraisals
   c. recognition
   d. job promotion
   e. business operation

3. What do you consider to be important criteria for an 'acceptable' ANALYTICAL report in your organisation? (please refer appendix for definitions)

	Very Important	Important	Quite Important	Not very Important
3.1 Content	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2 Organization	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.3 Language & Style	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.4 Format & Layout	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.5 Visual support	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.6 Other	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please write your views on what are important characteristics/features you consider in determining whether a written analytical report meet the standards regarded as 'acceptable' in your organisation (please refer appendix).

4.1 Content :
(in general and or specific to particular parts of the report e.g. findings, recommendations etc.)

4.2 Organization :

4.3 Language & Style :

4.4 Format & Layout :
(please also include the parts necessary in an analytical report)

4.5 Visual support   :

4.6 Other features/ comments :

5. Would you say that the standards expected are applicable to fresh graduates?

[   ] Certainly   [   ] More or less   [   ] At times   [   ] No

6. From your experience in reading reports written by fresh graduates, how would you rate the reports? Please tick your answer.

[   ]   Effective
[   ]   Rather effective
[   ]   Acceptable
[   ]   Deficient
[   ]   Unacceptable

7. What problems, if any, do you frequently encounter with reports written by fresh graduates? Please tick your answers.

	Frequent	Less frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
a. Content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Organization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Style	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Format	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Others. Please specify_____

_____

THANK YOU.

APPENDIX

1. A brief description of the terms mentioned in Section 2, questions 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3

    1.1 Informational report : a report that requires only a presentation of facts e.g fact finding, annual, progress reports.

    1.2 Analytical report : sometimes called the extended, recommendation or investigative report. It involves a presentation of facts, a review, an analysis and evaluation of the facts to be used as a basis for recommending actions.

    1.3 Feasibility study : a report which investigates the viability of a proposed project.Usually written to indicate how likely the project will be a success.

    1.4 Proposal : is not a report, by definition, but carries a similar function with 1.3 above in evaluating the feasibility of a particular company's undertaking.

2. A brief description of the terms mentioned in Section 3, questions no. 3 and 4.

    2.1 Content - refers to information presented in all sections of the reports. May include, among others, characteristics such as relevance of the facts/data selected to the purpose of the report and adequacy of the facts/data in conveying the message of the reports. Other possible characteristics may be originality and creativity of ideas and technical competence that pertain to specific parts of the report (findings, recommendations etc.) or the overall report.

    2.2 Organization - refers to arrangement and order of presentation, development and coherence. May include comments on uses of headings and subheadings.

    2.3 Language & Style - sentence structure, sentence length and variety, word choice as in relation to the business context and organizational audience. Also skills such as clarity, conciseness, brevity and others.

    2.4 Format & Layout

    2.5 Visual support - technical diagrams, charts, tables, graphs.

REPORTS EVALUATION- EDITORIAL WORKSHEET(Q2)

One of the objectives of this study is to determine whether the business reports written by students of the Business Administration and Economics faculties at UKM meet 'acceptability' standards of the workplace. To achieve this objective, it is necessary that you read and evaluate the students' reports given to you and make the necessary comments.

INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATOR

1. Please read the five (5) reports given to you.
2. Grade each report based on your holistic impressions as to the writers' ability in producing a business report that meets with organizational expectation or requirements. Use the scale given below. Consider the criteria for an 'acceptable' report set forth earlier in the 'Acceptability' Criteria Rating List.
1. Please make your comments/ revisions on the report itself.
2. Summarize/provide overall comments on the report in the space provided on the next page.

Fill in your grades on the reports in the table below using the following scale:

6 – Clearly more than acceptable.
5 – Possibly more than acceptable. Meets the requirements of an analytical report
4 – Acceptable. Functional for the designated audience.
3 – Possibly not acceptable
2 – Not acceptable. Cannot be relied on for organisational decision making or support
1 – Clearly not acceptable. Far below the standards expected of an analytical reports

Report/name of writers	6	5	4	3	2	1
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

Editorial Worksheet

Please summarize/provide overall comments on specific areas (e.g. content, language, style etc.) in the reports (both strengths and weaknesses).

Business Report 1

AREA	COMMENT

What recommendation(s) would you make to improve the reports?

AREA	COMMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Editorial Worksheet

Please summarize/provide overall comments on specific areas (e.g. content, language, style etc.) in the reports (both strengths and weaknesses).

Business Report 2

AREA	COMMENT

What recommendation(s) would you make to improve the reports?

AREA	COMMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Editorial Worksheet

Please summarize/provide overall comments on specific areas (e.g. content, language, style etc.) in the reports (both strengths and weaknesses).

Business Report 3

AREA	COMMENT

What recommendation(s) would you make to improve the reports?

AREA	COMMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Editorial Worksheet

Please summarize/provide overall comments on specific areas (e.g. content, language, style etc.) in the reports (both strengths and weaknesses).

Business Report 4

AREA	COMMENT

What recommendation(s) would you make to improve the reports?

AREA	COMMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

Editorial Worksheet

Please summarize/provide overall comments on specific areas (e.g. content, language, style etc.) in the reports (both strengths and weaknesses).

Business Report 5

AREA	COMMENT

What recommendation(s) would you make to improve the reports?

AREA	COMMMENT FOR IMPROVEMENT

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: PERSONAL PARTICULARS

1. Faculty:_____ 2. Major/field:_____
3. Year (1,2,3 or 4):_____ 4. SPM English grade:_____ 5. 1119 grade:_____
6. Previous General English proficiency course(s) taken at UKM and grade obtained:_____
7. Previous English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course(s) taken at UKM and grade obtained:_____
8. Work experience(s) related to your field of studies:_____
9. Reason(s) for taking this course:_____

SECTION II: GENERAL ISSUES ON REPORT WRITING (RW) COMPONENT

1. How much did you know about writing a business report before the course?

   [ ] very much   [ ] quite a lot   [ ] not very much   [ ] very little

2. How much do you know about writing a business report now after the course?

   [ ] very much   [ ] quite a lot   [ ] not very much   [ ] very little

3. Do you have a clear idea of what is expected of you in this course, with regards to writing business reports?

   [ ] very clear   [ ] quite clear   [ ] not very clear   [ ] very vague

4. How do you consider the Report Writing (RW) component in the course in relation to your future profession?

   [ ] relevant   [ ] quite relevant   [ ] not relevant   [ ] not sure

   Additional comments:_____

SECTION III: SPECIFIC AREAS ON RW IN THE COURSE

1a. Do you know the objective(s) of the RW component in the course?

b. If yes, how did you know? Tick your answer.

From course handouts	[ ]
From the teacher	[ ]
From friends	[ ]
Found out by yourself	[ ]
Other sources:	_____

1. What is your opinion of the objective(s). Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
   _____

2. What do you think is/are the objective (s) of the RW component in the course?
   _____

3. What do you think should be the objective (s) of the RW component and why?
   _____
   _____

4. Which of the following were you taught / given guidance on? Tick where applicable.

   a. writing statement of purpose   [   ]   k. relating action to purpose & conclusion [   ]
   b. writing the background   [   ]   l. supporting opinion with data   [   ]
   c. writing conclusions   [   ]   m. using appropriate language for RW   [   ]
   d. writing recommendations   [   ]   n. developing RW style   [   ]
   e. selecting information   [   ]   p. learning to think critically   [   ]
   f. organising information   [   ]   q. learning to work independently   [   ]
   g. evaluating findings   [   ]   r. using headings & subheadings   [   ]
   h. interpreting findings   [   ]   s. using graphics/visual aids   [   ]
   i. summarizing findings   [   ]   t. interpreting visual aids   [   ]
   j. proposing courses of action   [   ]   u. preparing an oral report presentation [   ]

5. What else do you think should have been included?
   u._____
   v._____
   w._____
   (please list more, if necessary)

6. Which of the skills above are important to you? Rank your choices in 5&6 in order of
   importance below. An example has been given .

   0. r
   1._____   5._____
   2._____   6._____
   3._____   7._____
   4._____   8._____
   (please add on to this list, if necessary)

7. Which other areas/items in question 5 are important to you but were not taught?
   _____

8a. Were you able to learn all the RW skills that were taught?

   [   ] yes, all of them   [   ] most of them   [   ] some   [   ] very few   [   ] none

b. If your answer in (a) is 'very few' or 'none', please explain why.
   _____

c. Which areas/skills were particularly difficult for you?
   _____
   _____

Evaluate the following on a scale of 1- 5.
(Please circle the number which best represents your opinion on the issues in question).

SA= Strongly agree   U=Undecided   D= Disagree
A= Agree   SD= Strongly disagree

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The objectives of the RW component were clear to me	5	4	3	2	1
2. The objectives of the RW component were practical	5	4	3	2	1
3. The objectives of the RW component were relevant for me	5	4	3	2	1
4. The RW subject was covered at appropriate depth	5	4	3	2	1
5. The RW content is relevant to my future career	5	4	3	2	1
6. RW in this course is interesting	5	4	3	2	1
7. The approach to writing reports used in this course was useful in allowing me the opportunity to write better	5	4	3	2	1
8. The length of time allocated to learning and writing reports was appropriate	5	4	3	2	1
9. RW in the course addressed my needs in writing in English for my specific discipline	5	4	3	2	1
10. I have gained a good understanding of RW					
11. I was able to use the skills and strategies needed to write various parts of a business report	5	4	3	2	1
12. Instructions and explanations on the skills and strategies needed in writing a business report were clear	5	4	3	2	1
13. I received enough feedback from the teacher on my progress in writing various parts of a business report	5	4	3	2	1
14. The feedback which I got from the teacher was useful in helping me acquire the necessary RW skills	5	4	3	2	1
15. The handout(s)/reading materials on RW were useful in helping me understand the RW subject	5	4	3	2	1
16. The reading materials were adequate	5	4	3	2	1
17. The required materials(inside & outside the classroom) in producing the report were available	5	4	3	2	1
18. Classroom writing tasks and activities were sufficient to provide me with the necessary practice in writing a business report required in the course	5	4	3	2	1
19. I find RW in the course manageable	5	4	3	2	1
20. I like working in groups to write the report	5	4	3	2	1
21. The assessment procedure in the course was fair	5	4	3	2	1
22. All in all I have developed the ability to write a business report	5	4	3	2	1
23. The practice of writing reports was a useful learning experience	5	4	3	2	1
24. I am prepared to apply what I have learned/ to use the skills developed in writing reports in the workplace	5	4	3	2	1

25. All things considered, how would you rate the Report Writing component in this course?

Very good		Satisfactory			Very poor	
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

26. Please provide additional comments on the RW component in the course
    (you may also give specific comments on any of the issues outlined in numbers 1-25
    above).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
7/9/1999

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: PERSONAL PARTICULARS

1. Department:_____ 2. Position:_____
3. Length of service at UKM:_____ 4. Teaching experience: _____ (in no. of years)
5. Academic qualification:_____
6. Professional qualification:_____
7. Previous English for Specific Courses (ESP) taught at UKM:_____

8. Present ESP courses taught at UKM:_____
9. Reason(s) for teaching English for Business course:_____

SECTION II: GENERAL ISSUES ON REPORT WRITING (RW) COMPONENT

1. How much do you think students knew about writing a business report before the course?

    [   ] very much   [   ] quite a lot   [   ] not very much   [   ] very little

2. How much do you think students know about writing a business report now after the course?

    [   ] very much   [   ] quite a lot   [   ] not very much   [   ] very little

3. Do you have a clear idea of what is expected of you in this course, with regard to teaching the writing of business reports?

    [   ] very clear   [   ] quite clear   [   ] not very clear   [   ] very vague

4. If your answer above is 'quite clear', 'not very clear', or 'very vague', which of the following were problematic to you? Please rank from the most problematic (1) to least problematic (7). Allocate the same number for areas which were equally problematic.

    a. RW content   [   ]
    b. RW materials   [   ]
    c. Approach/methodology   [   ]
    d. Assessment/grading   [   ]
    e. Classroom tasks/activities [   ]
    f. Teaching points   [   ]
    g. Others   [   ]
       (please specify)

5. How do you consider the RW component in the course in relation to your students' future professions?

    [   ] relevant   [   ] quite relevant   [   ] not relevant   [   ] not sure

    Additional comments:_____

SECTION III: SPECIFIC AREAS ON RW IN THE COURSE

1. What is the objective(s) of the RW component as stated in the course?
   _____

2. What is your opinion of the objective(s). Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
   _____

3. What do you think is/are the objective (s) of the RW component in the course?
   _____
   _____

4. What do you think should be the objective (s) of the RW component and why?
   _____
   _____

5. Which of the following did you teach / provide guidance on? Tick where applicable.

   a. writing statement of purpose   [   ]   k. relating action to purpose & conclusion [   ]
   b. writing the background   [   ]   l. supporting opinion with data   [   ]
   c. writing conclusions   [   ]   m. using appropriate language for RW   [   ]
   d. writing recommendations   [   ]   n. developing RW style   [   ]
   e. selecting information   [   ]   o. learning to think critically   [   ]
   f. organising information   [   ]   p. learning to work independently   [   ]
   g. evaluating findings   [   ]   q. using headings & subheadings   [   ]
   h. interpreting findings   [   ]   r. using graphics/visual aids   [   ]
   i. summarizing findings   [   ]   s. interpreting visual aids   [   ]
   j. proposing courses of action   [   ]   t. preparing an oral report presentation [   ]

6. What other RW skills, other than in no. 5, were included in your teaching?
   u._____
   v._____
   w._____
   (please list more, if necessary)

7a. Which of the skills above do you think are important for students in producing a report expected in this course? Rank your choices in 5&6 in order of importance below. An example has been given .

   0. r
   1._____   6._____
   2._____   7._____
   3._____   8._____
   4._____   9._____
   5._____   10._____(please add on this list, if necessary)

   b. Which other areas/items in question 5 are important but were not taught/delivered?
   _____

8a. Do you think students were able to learn all the RW skills that were taught?

[　] yes, all of them　[　] most of them　[　] some　[　] very few　[　] none

b. If your answer in (a) is 'very few' or 'none', please explain why.

_____

c. Which areas/skills did you find were particularly difficult for the students?

_____

_____

SECTION IV: STUDENT PERFORMANCE

8. Given the performance of your current students in the course, what do you think are areas of strengths and weaknesses in their written reports? Tick where applicable. More than one ticks is acceptable.

	Strength	Weakness
a. Content	☐	☐
b. Organization	☐	☐
c. Language & Style	☐	☐
d. Format & Layout	☐	☐
e. Visual support	☐	☐
f. Other(please specify)	☐	☐

Comments_____

_____

9. What criteria did you use in assessing the above? Tick where applicable.

a. Used the criteria of a good report laid out in the course　　　　　[　]
b. Used my own criteria of a good report　　　　　　　　　　　　[　]
c. Used some of the criteria of a good report in the course
　　and included some of my own　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[　]
d. Used criteria I know are required in business organizations　　　　[　]

Please state reason(s) for your choice

_____

_____

_____

SECTION V: OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE RW COMPONENT

Evaluate the following on a scale of 1- 5.
(Please circle the number which best represents your opinion on the issues in question).

SA= Strongly agree   U=Undecided   D= Disagree
A= Agree   SD= Strongly disagree

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The objectives of the RW component were clear to me	5	4	3	2	1
2. The objectives of the RW component were practical	5	4	3	2	1
3. The objectives of the RW component were relevant for students	5	4	3	2	1
4. The RW subject was covered at appropriate depth	5	4	3	2	1
5. The RW content is relevant to my students' career	5	4	3	2	1
6. RW in this course is interesting	5	4	3	2	1
7. The approach to writing reports used in this course was useful in helping students write	5	4	3	2	1
8. The length of time allocated to learning and writing reports was appropriate	5	4	3	2	1
9. RW in the course addressed my students' needs in writing in English	5	4	3	2	1
10. Students have shown considerabe improvement in their writing	5	4	3	2	1
11. Students were able to use the skills and strategies needed to write various parts of a business report	5	4	3	2	1
12. My instructions and explanations on the skills and strategies needed in writing a business report were clear	5	4	3	2	1
13. I think I have provided enough help and guidance for students to acquire RW skills	5	4	3	2	1
14. The handout(s)/reading materials on RW provided were useful in helping students understand the RW subject	5	4	3	2	1
15. The reading materials provided in the course were adequate	5	4	3	2	1
16. The required materials(inside & outside the classroom) in producing the report were available	5	4	3	2	1
17. I think RW in the course was manageable for students	5	4	3	2	1
18. Writing reports in groups is beneficial for students	5	4	3	2	1
19. Students liked working in groups to write the report	5	4	3	2	1
20. The assessment procedure in the course was fair	5	4	3	2	1
21. The assessment procedure was reflective of students' writing ability	5	4	3	2	1
22. All in all students have developed the ability to write a business report	5	4	3	2	1
23. I see the practice of writing reports as a useful learning experience for students	5	4	3	2	1
24. I think students are equipped to use the RW skills developed in this course for writing reports in the workplace	5	4	3	2	1

25. All things considered, how would you rate the Report Writing component in this course?

Very good   Satisfactory   Very poor

7   6   5   4   3   2   1

26. Please provide additional comments on the RW component in the course
(you may also give specific comments on any of the issues outlined in numbers 1-25
above).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
7/9/1999

APPENDIX F

PRE-INTERVIEW: EMPLOYERS

Procedure

1. Explain purpose of the interview and length of time possibly taken
2. Explain purpose of research
3. Give overview of the interview
4. Request permission for audiotaping

QUESTIONNAIRE; SECTION I: PERSONAL PARTICULARS

Check answers in the questionnaire.

SECTION II: REPORT WRITING ACTIVITIES

Follow-up to Question 1

1. Briefly state the functions of the reports in your organisation. What kinds of managerial decisions will be made from them?
2. Who writes the reports and to whom do you direct them?
3. Roughly what proportion of the organisation's time is devoted to
   i.   informational, routine reports
   ii.   analytical, special reports
4. Do you have your own classification of reports (than the ones provided in the questionnaire)?

Question 2

1. Has the frequency of writing and reviewing reports changed over the last 5 years?How? Do you see the need for more reports now considering the
   i.   technological changes
   ii.   economic downturn
   iii. others

2. Can you or your department cope with the demands? If no, do you see the need for more trained personnels? Why or why not?

SECTION III: REPORT WRITING SKILLS

Follow-up to Question 1

1. (If RW a favourable skill) How do good RW skills, especially in writing analytical reports contribute to
   - recruitment
   - staff appraisals
   - recognition
   - promotion

Question 2

1. Go over questionnaire responses on the criteria gatekeeper ticked as important.

Follow-up/Probe

a. I'm trying to establish what criteria your organisation or yourself use in assessing analytical reports for use within your organisation. Please tell me:

i.   why certain criteria (as in answers in questionnaire) are seen to be more important than others?
ii. What and why specific features are necessary for each of the criterion in no. i. Ask about other possible features:

   - Content: degree of analysis, approach(original, sophisticated, textbookish)
                     Technical competence, analytical abilities
                     Other responses given by respondents

   - Organization: arrangement of points;order of most important to the least
   - Language & Style: sentence length and variety; formal business style; passive and active; correct grammar (to what extent is expected).

b. What other skills do you see are necessary in undertaking the task of RW?

Question 3

1. From your experience, how would you describe the abilities and skills of fresh local graduates in terms of i. General skills ii. RW skills
2. It has been said that local graduates lack the necessary language skills to perform effectively in the workplace. Do you agress?Have you encountered problems where graduates failed to write?

Question 4

1. Go over answers in the questionnaire.

Follow-up/Probe

a. If the reports written by graduates 'acceptable', please define/explain what requirements were fulfilled.
   What set them apart from being an 'effective' report?
   What is necessary for the reports to come close to being 'effective'?

b. If 'deficient', please define/explain: what particular features were lacking in the reports?

c. If 'unacceptable', please explain: what were the weaknesses? What usually happens in cases like these? Are the reports returned to the writers or do you (Senior Managers) undertake the task of revising them?

Question 5

1. Please, if you could, be more specific on some of the main problems you see in reports written by fresh graduates.

APPENDIX G

POST INTERVIEW - EMPLOYERS
REPORTS EVALUATION

Procedure

1. Thank employers/gatekeepers for evaluating the reports
2. Explain procedure of the interview:
    i.   Go over Editorial Worksheet (Q2)
    ii.   Look at reports – to obtain opinion on why each report was found to be acceptable/unacceptable. Aspects to be focused on: Content, Organization etc. as applicable. Also to obtain views on recommendations for improvements to the reports.
3. Request for audiotaping.

Editorial Worksheet

1. Ask for results of the evaluation.
   Did the reports fulfill your requirements of an 'acceptable' report? Did they meet with the criteria set forth earlier?

2. Go over the Editorial Worksheet to look at gatekeepers' general comments on the reports.

Reports

1. Go over each report. Note specific comments gatekeepers make about the report. Try cover all the criteria (Content, Organization, Language & Style, Presentation) but allow for some freedom:
   Why did you find this report acceptable/unacceptable? What specific aspects of the report were strengths and/or what aspects were weaknesses? Try comment on specific criteria, if you can, but not in any specific order.

2. What would be your recommendations in improving the report so that it achieves the standard you expect of an analytical report at this level?

APPENDIX H

STUDENT INTERVIEW

Procedure

1. Explain purpose of interview.
2. Explain purpose of research.
3. Give overview of interview- go over questionnaire responses
   - probe for clarification and explanations
   - go over reports written by group

Questionnaire responses: Follow-up questions

Section I: Personal Particulars

Section II: General Issues on Report Writing (RW)

1. If students chose 'not very much' or 'very little'in response to the question on how much they knew about writing reports after the course, ask for reasons.
2. If students chose 'not very clear' or 'very vague' in reponse to the question on whether they had a clear idea of what was expected of them in the course, ask for reasons.
3. If students chose 'not relevant' in response to whether they considered the RW component of the course relevant to their future profession, ask for reasons.

Section III: Specific areas on RW in the course

1. If students could not remember objective(s), help out.
2. Check that answers were clear and questions were interpreted correctly especially for question 2, 3, 4.
3. Questions on skills taught in the course:

   i.   Were these skills taught formally in the classroom or during conferencing?
   ii.   Why do you think that each one of you ticked different skills?
   iii. Do you find that as you were writing the report, each one of you preferred for different skills to be taught?

4. Question on how much students were able to learn all the RW skills that were taught:

   i.   If students chose 'some', 'very few' or 'none', ask for reasons: Would you care to tell me why you chose this answer? What would be the reasons which prevented you from learning these skills?

ii.   (On difficulty with some skills) Do you think the difficulty level of some skills dependent on topics or that they are difficult by themselves?

Section IV: Overall Evaluation of the RW Component (close-ended questions)

1. Go over students' responses. Probe when necessary.
2. Ask for clarifications/ further explanations on students' additional comments on the course.

<u>Study of Reports</u>

1. What do you think of the report which your group wrote? What did you like about it? What did you not like about it?
2. Study the report written by group and ask for feedback on improvement to the report according to the following procedure:

Content	-	Students' comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Students' additional comments

Organization	-	Students' comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Students' additional comments

Language & Style	-	Students comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Student's additional comments

| Presentation | - | same |

| Other areas | - | same |

APPENDIX I

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Procedure

1. Explain purpose of interview
2. Explain purpose of research
3. Provide overview of interview - go over questionnaire responses
   - probe for clarification/explanations
   - go over reports

Questionnaire reponses: Follow-up questions

Section 1: Personal Particulars

Section II: General issues on RW Component

1. If teacher chose 'not very much' or 'very little' in response to the questions on how much students knew about writing a business report after the course, ask for reasons.
2a. If teacher chose 'not very clear' or 'very vague' in response to the question on whether she had a clear idea of what is expected of her with regard to teaching business reports in the course, ask for reasons.
  b. Probe for specific details on the problems teacher had with any of the aspects she chose from the list given in the questionnaire (Content, Materials, Approach, Assessment, Classroom tasks etc).
3. If teacher chose 'not relevant' or 'not sure' as to whether she considered the RW component in the course relevant to students' future profession, ask for reasons.

Section III: Specific Areas on RW in the Course

1. Ask about the objective(s) of the course and check that questions 3, 4 were interpreted and answered correctly. Get clarifications when necessary.
2. If you were to devise your own objective(s) for the course, what would they be?
3. Questions on skills taught in the course:

   i.   Were these skills taught formally in the classroom or during conferencing, in response to the needs of different groups of students?
   ii.   Did you find that different students in your class needed different skills?
   iii. What do you think could be the reasons why the students' answers on the skills taught?

4. (For question 9) If teacher chose 'some', 'very few' or 'none' in response to question on whether students were able to learn all the RW skills taught, ask for reasons.
5. Is the level of difficulty of the skills dependent on topics? Would students find some of the skills difficult anyway regardless of topics?

Section IV: Student Performance

1. Please provide more details on the strengths and weaknesses of the students' reports.

Section V: Overall Evaluation of the RW Component

1. Go over teacher's responses. Probe when necessary.
2. Ask for further information/clarifications on teacher's additional comments on areas of improvement for the course.

Study of reports

1. What do you of the report? What did you like about it and what did you not like about it (specific areas of strengths and weaknesses)?
2. How would you describe the particular group of students' progress during the writing the report (slow, satisfactory, good etc)?
3. Study the report. Ask for teacher's feedback on improvement for the report according to the following procedure:

Content	-	Teacher's comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Teacher's additional comments
Organization	-	Teacher's comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Teacher's additional comments
Language & Style	-	teacher's comments/ideas for improvement
		Gatekeeper's comments/ideas for improvement
		Teacher's additional comments
Presentation	-	same as above
Others	-	same as above

REPORT TOPICS: MARKET RESEARCH REPORT

Imagine a hypothetical situation in which you are working for a company that provides online information and transaction information services to corporate clients and the public in general.

The company aims to provide quality services to customers by maximizing IT resources and technology in the most efficient, effective and economical ways possible.

The following are research areas which your Marketing Manager has identified. Your task is to write a report addressing any one of the areas as thoroughly as possible. Use both secondary and primary sources to obtain your findings.

Research area 1

What is the direction of the Internet in managing the business environment? What are the tools used and how is it being used?

Research area 2

What stage is online content service in Malaysia? Define what is content and how can it be useful. Define what is financial content and how current technology can assist in making it more affordable and accessible.

Research area 3

Describe in detail the past, present and future methods of collaboration and communication.

Research area 4

Define product development, cycle etc. Choose a product in the market, preferably a financially related product and explain in detail product cycle as well as its possible development.

Online content service: KLSE, KLCE, Kloffe, Klibor, Newscontent (Bloomberg, Bernama, AFX)

Financially related product: PAL direct, Bluechip, Fishnet etc.

REPORT TOPICS: HUMAN RESOURCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Imagine a hypothetical situation in which you are working for a company that provides online information and transaction information services to corporate clients and the public in general.

The company aims to provide quality services to customers by maximizing IT resources and technology in the most efficient, effective and economical ways possible.

The following are research areas which your Manager of Administration has identified. Your task is to write a report addressing any one of the areas as thoroughly as possible. Use both secondary and primary sources to obtain your findings.

A.

Research area 1

Describe Quality System and its usefulness and purposes to an organisation. Kindly include the 5 structures and an example of each.

Research area 2

Briefly explain ISO 9000 and the certifcation process available in Malaysia. How can that be applied to financially related industry.

Research area 3

Explain Quality Assessment series. What is the identical standard applicable in Malaysia. Which series apply to financial related environment and the process of certification involved.

B.

Research area 1

The company is thinking of recruiting the following:

    A. A software Engineer. The prospective candidate has no previous working experience as he has recently graduated from a local University with a degree in Computer Engineering.

B. Another Software Engineer with the same job function as number A. The prospective candidate is a diploma holder from Tunku Abdul Rahman College with a Diploma in Computer Engineering. This candidate has also no job experience.

C. A Marketing Executive. The prospective candidate whom is a Law graduate and has 2 years experience as a Credit Control Officer in a local bank. His previous experience is not relevant at all with the marketing Executive function.

The company has got no formal salary structure nor a policy on determining salary. How do you determine the justifiable salary for them? Give reasons to your answer.

Research area 2

The company has a total of 100 employees with 60 job functions altogether. As the Human Resource Manager, you have been requested to write a report on the objectives and benefits of having a formal salary structure. You report must also describe in detail the process towards developing a formal salary structure, the required manpower to perform the survey, if any, and how long the whole process of developing the salary structure would take.

Research area 3

Since the company existed in 1987 career planning has not been the top priority. A lot of the employees has remained in "dead-end" job. Some even remained doing the same job for the past 10 years.

The management now feels that the company needs better career direction if it is to develop and grow. As the Human Resource Manager, you are to write a report on the following:

1. What would be the advantages to the company of setting up such a career planning program/
2. Who should participate in the program? All employees or selected employees only?
3. Describe the program you would propose for injecting a career planning and development perspective into the company.

PRE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
GATEKEEPER 1

I – Interviewer   G – Gatekeeper   ON – Observational notes

I : **What are the functions of these reports? Basically for management decisions. What type of managerial decisions will be made from them?**

G : Informational will probably be more when…..one of them may be updates of status, some of them will be more competitors analysis, just information on what's going on in the markets….but I found it difficult when I tried to answer this because some of them is a combination of everything in one. When you broke it up into informational, analytical…I had to try and segregate the reports that I've done before, try to put it into categories…that's why I said it depending on the circumstances, each of this five has its own relevancy. So if I'm writing a report on…latest status, so it's very straightforward, point form…this is what I did…this is what I did last month, this is what I achieved…to me this is more informational. Like when I asked one of my executicves to go out and go to an exhibition and come back and tell me what the competitors are doing over there…. So there's no stats, nothing…just this is how they did it, this is what they're pushing, their pricing…..so very informational…

I : **So, basically to convey information?**

G : yeh… they convey information .

I : **What about analytical reports. Maybe you can tell me one or two examples.**

G : Analytical would be more like a market study…they have to find out what's the market segmentation, the market share we're looking at, what are our status now…ah… do some calculation if we want to achieve this, recommend something to the management…if I what to achieve this, what do I have to do, what kind of costing…or marketing budget…so it's more analytical .

I : **How often do you write them? Do you write them?**

G : Yes, yes, sometimes my staff give me all the details, send them out to find things out I make some sense into it. How often…informational is more often but like I said it's more like once in two months..a combination of thislah coz when I do my reports, it's actually a combination of all these.

I : **You mentioned that reports can be a combination of all these types, do you have your own classification of reports?**

G : OK, it depends on the paper.So the papers that I've been doing is either a business proposal, whether we should go into certain specific venture, product development...you want to introduce a new product, what are the pros and cons, what' the cost involved, what's the pricing. The other kind of report that I do would be...existing product development...what are the products that we have, analyse the product we have now, gather more information. These are the three main ones that I've been doing for quite awhile. New product development, business...more like coming up with business plans.

I : **Has the frequency of writing reports changed over the years, with the technological advancement, and or economic downturn. Has the frequency of writing lessened?**

G : Actually, it has become more with the economic downturn...ah...not much changes in terms of the type or the quality, in fact with the economic downturn, we have to be more stringent and the time frame has become shorter. We don't have the luxury time to say you'ge got one month to do this paper ....sometimes you have two weeks to get it done. I've gotten some proposals that I need to do in two days but the greatest advantage I have now is the Net that provides me with this source of informnation

I : So proposals are for coming up with new products in order to be competitive?

G : Yes. To me, another proposal that I've done recently is new product development. It's like proposal on streamlining or recycling the company. If you're looking at the type of study, the type of survey that we do...analytical studies, it's more internal.

I : **Are any of the reports for external purposes?**

G : Most of the reports I do is more for internal uses.

I : **Can you cope with the writing demand?**

G : At my level now, I must say no. Too much is expected. At the same time I want to pass to my execs, their approach is slightly different so they get different results. I have to guide them, so I started off by telling them how to get the info. When they get the info, they gather, they put it on paper for me, and I ask them what do these figures tell me. I have to force them do try and not just give numbers-tell me what they mean, tell me what you think...ah...they have to come back to me and say something. I cannot just say to my MD that this is the executive that actually recommended this....even though I do ask for their opinion because thay have fresh approach.

I : But in the end it comes back to you?

G : Yes, it still comes back to me. I still have to vet through...a lot of times I still have to vet through. I cannot just take it.

I : **Would you say that what they've written show that they are actually trained for such things?**

G : No. When they start doing reports, they tend to not know how to get the information. I don't know whether they were not taught how to go and find, but they don't know how to go and find. For example, if they say, how do I know who my competitors are and I say you look at what we have. We are selling financially related product, then you go back to the directory or the Net and refer financial services in Malaysia. You know, simple information like this, they don't know.

I : **(probing questions to questionnaire responses on report writing activities) This one is clear to you?(go over answers)…you listen to reports…?**

G : Yes, I listen to them. Sometimes I force them to because I think it's an important skill to learn. If you don't know how to talk, how can you be going through life not knowing how to talk.

I : **Edit reports? Are you talking about your own?**

G : No, no. I was referring more to other people's reports(interviewer interjects: your exceecutives?) That is why sometimes there's not enough time..I edit their reports, sometimes I edit other Senior Manager's(SM) reports…over here, they will ask all the SM to vet each other's reports, proposals..give ideas. So between preparing, educating, editing and others…it's kinda quite…

I : **So when you talk about reports are you talking about everything here plus proposals because Sha mention that they call it a report and sometimes a writeup.Proposals are sometimes also called a report because you look at a problem and propose solution….**

G : Yeh, right.

I : Assisting others..SM or executives?

G : SM and executives.

I : **Carrying out research….one of the junior exec did say that she carried out lots of research…**

G : Yes, when I do this, is when I do product development which consists of the features of the product, the quality of the product, the quality of my customer service. I've to do some external research. I've to call or send reports and get feedback from my customers.

I : Senior Managers do that?

G : Yes, but this one is one of those that actually I tell my crew that these are my objectives…can you set up a bunch of questionnaires…the flowlah..All I need to know is the feedback I need to get and from there I write my own reports. My execs will get me get (inaudible).

I : **Do you have some kind of an assessment procedure.**

G : Yes.

I : **Does writing come in?**

G : No. I personally employ people....I don't look at their writing skills. Their behaviour, their attitude of wanting to learn, their open-mindedness, that's more important to me than a piece of paper that say ' I got a Grade A....for example, my previous job...I actually had a list of three. I actually took the person with the least qualification and this person was one of the best executives that I had in terms of dedication, work ethics. The other two that I forgo- one had Dean's List, the other had an ACCA.

I : **(Went through questions on criteria for reports and restate objective of research). Content...relevant...Executive Summary...this is a must in any report?**

G : I feel that it's an important thing because like I said if I'm writing this business plan for a potential investor, I will always play the role of the investor.....I wouldn't want to read a lot of things. I only want to see whether the product is good, how much you want, what are you gonna spend it on and what's my return. Everything else is irrelevant because once I have the money I don't have the time to read too many things. I need to try to put all these things in a clear form in the Executive Summary. I've done this and so far it has worked.Again it is depending on the person reading. Usually the guy goes straight to the financial section and skip the other sections....and the recommendation..okay..they sign it, fine. That's why I thought instead of writing a long body (of the report), might as well I concentrate my effort more on this. That's why to write a good Executive Summary which is about a page long....... A page and a half...it's not as easy as it looks coz you're trying to tell the guy what it is...this whole book and put in one page. The way I write my paper is I indent it (show sample) so there's a big gap you know for graphs, pictures if I want to illustrate....

I : **Do you write the Executive Summary yourself?**

G : Yeh, I write that. I feel it is one of the things that I self -learn you know coz I felt that after doing a few reports people at the higher rank has no time, I think, to read a lot. They just look at it and then... try and gauge what the paper is all about.

I : **You write the Executive Summary because you feel you are more able to write it?**

G : Yeh.

I : **What about the analysis in the body/findings section?How important is that?**

G : It is sometimes, but not to this kind of audience. It depends on the audience. The investor would say okay, good enough ...then he'll pass this to the -----people that will go through it properly, but the initial process of getting through the first layer-the potential investor has to be quick and snappy-something straight to the point, no crap no nothing.

I : **What degree of analysis must be present in a report that is, say investigative in nature?**

G : To the max. For example a Business Model. Let's say product A. You will have to know what your market share is, who your competitors are. I give an example of a business model because it encompasses marketing strategy, marketing analysis, product development, your plan in the next three years, what are your financial requirements, what is your cash flow, how's your projected balance sheet, how's your projected PNL. But that only goes to the second levellah. The first level the guy only wants to see what's my summary of my PNL. Ant then if I'm asking for one million, he wants to see how much I spend it it in a day…I'll say half a million on capital expenditure..my revenue will be this much, this much, this much and I will recover back in two years. That's all he wants to see. It's money out, money in and when. And maybe at the premium or yearly figure…the second layer is more important …when the detail part comes in when the first layer, the MD or someone counted and said is this financial thing correct. Did I leave out anything? You should not think that the Executive Summary is the only important thing-one page that's it. You still have to prepare the whole thing. The guy cannot be coming back to you and say 'do this again'. You have to include every single thing assuming that the guy reading it knows next to nothing about the whole thing. You have to educate the person, tell the person everything. Assume the worst case scenario. Talk about the product. Tell him about the industry. Explain to the max. If he knows he'll just skip because your Table of Content will tell you where everything is . For example- this is the role of organization- the executive summary, the introduction for a business plan (referring to written text)…what is the industry, what is its income, product value, detailed product description…so he will read this and skip all this part (referring to written example) until he comes to Financial highlights. Even that I would put some of that in the executive summary-the appendix contains all the other details…but the second layer will look at this more thoroughly. Of course you will miss a little; one or two things but you will have to (when writing) look at it (an issues) as thoroughly as possible.

I : **How much time do you spend on a report?**

G : What…a business plan?

I : **Yes, for example.**

G : The first time I wrote a business plan…it took me two months….three months. Nowadays because of the time pressure, I have to do it in….. sometimes… in two weeks..

I : **with research?**

G : Yes, with research. So that's why when I have to write something and I cannot do it I'll be very blunt with my boss and say 'I've no clue about this product. I need more time'. But I'm a very "Net" person…so the boss tells me.. "Can you give me a business model, write a proposal for this;possible new venture with this"….on the Net….took me twp weeks (to get information). Of course I just did one and it took me…three weeks. The difficult part was more trying to get the market share external analysis…financial analysis is easier.

I : **That one you get it from outside source?**

G : Yes. But if I took that part away, my financial analysis took me two to three days... introduction...two to three weeks.

I : **Okay. With the financial analysis and other kinds of analysis which you have to do/include, would you say that technical competence is an important factor in writing a report?**

G : Technical competence like?

I : **Well, for someone to be able to analyse things to the maximum; to give everything, right, as opposed to somebody who misses out on necessary parts – that requires technical competence – technical knowledge about many things.....**

G : Background knowledge, industry knowledge.....yes.

I : **And if your staff don't have enough of that?**

G : I will assist the person. Okay, this is where you get the info....this is where you read. I start bombarding him with questions. I don't think this kind of knowledge I should keep to myself – from my execs. Whenever I get anything interesting on the Net, I'll ask them to read and then I'll ask them what do you think. Passing them the info is one thing. I need to get...(pause)..I need to ask them what do you think about that, what do you think the industry going to be...intriguing questions...what is this, what is that. I have to ask them a lot of 'what if' questions like 'what if this happens' and then 'why?' 'What if my competitors use this?' So lots of scenario.

I : **Approach. Maybe you would like to talk about the 'approach' one uses in writing (gatekeeper interrupts - "what do you mean 'approach?") (interviewer continues) Well, for example an approach can be said to be textbookish or some people may say a report is sophisticated.**

G : Like organization? How you approach the paper?

I : **Well, something like that.**

G : What I do is I normally identify what my paper is and then my target audience and what are the things that are important. So this is not standard you know. It's changing. The important one will be my Executive Summary and if I need to give my financial analysis...projection but the middle part (referring to gatekeeper's written example of Table of Content) I change as I go along...this product...will have this kind of information...this paper will have this Table of Content.. So I start off with this, then only I write my paper. By having this, to me, I'll know what kind of (inaudible)... how do I delegate my work, okay like this one goes to my Marketing exec, this one goes to the Finance exec. So my approach has always been...first who my reader is, what kind of paper I'm doing and I start writing. I cannot take a textbook and say..point one is the Executive Summary, point two has to be the Introduction. Sometimes I skip the Introduction depending on the report.

I : **On that note, we teach our students when it comes to organization that you should put the most important information first and least important last. However, from your explanation, it's more like situation...context based dependent on audience. Something that is more practical.**

G : Yeh..yeh. I think the questions you can ask your students, let's say if the're doing a Marketing paper..what is the most important thing your reader wants to see. Again it comes back to the issue of how much you want to spend...say this marketing strategy will need this much money and comfortably, this is how much we will get from this and in between that this is how we can get this to come through...that's all. So I don't have to tell you this product definition is...no need because the company will already know that. If need be, I will attach a company brochure....if they really want to knowlah. If the directors don't know just put an attachment of your product coz you already have a corporate profile. So a lot of work you don't have to do it again. Like a Business Model..that is to do with a new product then that's different. Again it depends on the situation. There's no such thing to me as ABCD ..I can jumble it up as long as the message gets through. Marketing students can be taught in terms of 'What are you fees of (inaudible), what's it gonna cost, what is its effectiveness, what are people doing, why do you think this is going to work, how much it's going to cost the company, how you're going to monitor people coming...'

(end of side A)

G : You have to check what are the existing sales like or why the existing sale's not coming in? So if you do very textbook like, then how are you gonna get the sales figure? Let's say the sales figure for this month is this..this kind of specific information. If you tell them to do a Marketing proposal...then they start looking at the book...some things are not relevant, you know..like 'Corder' (name of maybe a fictitious writer) might say this but it might not work. I see this in one of my Marketing executive..they say 'En.......I'm sure this would work,'then I say 'How do you know?' Because 'Cordler' said so! To me the textbook is just a guide. The way the digital economy is going, traditional marketing is out so the way we do paper,especially if you do a paper on the Net, three weeks is a bit too long.

I : **Too long?**

G : Traditional product macam nak buka kedai okay, but if you want to sell stuff over the Net, that is do some Net business, three weeks is already long. From what I've read, a lot of successful Net business - their Business Model was never in a paper written format. It's always on a piece of tissue paper...he draws, chats with his friends....okay this is how much I need to get this and that..they go off and in two or three pages with some diagrams okay.

I : **Very diagrammatical?**

G : Yes. I think I mentioned somewhere here (refering to written example : gatekeeeper's own) that diagrams and illustrations are important. But if you just merely put them there, no use. It will confuse the reader more. People, I think, will focus on the diagrams first then they look at the flow, they look at what the diagram say so if your diagram is not relevant- doesn't show what you're writing to the paragraph (relate), there's no definition or descriptions of what the diagram or graph is all about…then no pointlah. So it has to fit in. If you say in your Executive Summary that I will need 500 000 and this is the revenue…so you can say 'please refer to Appendix A for full detail of cost and revenue analysis. So if you wanna show a flow of product cycle, show the flow next to what you are explaining. Don't put it elsewhere. If you put the diagram on the next page, sometimes readers will ask where's the diagram. Somebody's asking me that means that the diagram is at the wrong page.The reader must be able to find it easily without asking you where it is. It has to be very clear.

I : **But students don't know that.Well, we assume students know that**

G : They don't. We don't. We don't (interviewer interjects "We?"). Well, I lah. Before but I learn as I go along.

(interviewer goes over written comments from gatekeeper)

G : (commenting on criteria of Language, on the notion of 'no jargon')
If you can, when you buy that magazine, Business 2.0, (you'll see that) they try to put the words in layman terms. If there are jargons inside, they will actually show it in a box placed very closed to the word refered to (in an intertext). To me, the language (of a report) has to be very easy. So if I tell you….like…VOIP??? It's a habit with people…..tend to say things that I think people will understand but we (people) don't. Even when I'm writing this(refering to his written comments/text produced on criteria of reports), I asked myself what is the best way of explaining this without putting too much jargon in.

I : **Language can also be referred to 'Business' language. Are you familiar with that?**

G : No

I : **You know, 'business style'. Very formal language use. Examples are 'for your perusal'….**

G : Like letter-writing ? That one I pass to my secretary (pause). If you use the e-mail, if I want to send, even to my MD..I would say 'here's the paper you wanted. Please (inaudible) if you need anything else. No 'Dear…please find attached…' - I've got no time for that.

(Interviewer goes over written-up comments from gatekeeper)
(Gatekeeper shows one sample of his product for immediate viewing. Treated as confidential)

G : (on sample report). This is an example of an informative report…it's like a status report. Like this part is basically business concept. The guy just wanted to see what it is, what is the product. All of these…. product description. So I explained what is…Voice Over IP……(confidential)so there is a small picture here (for illustration)…this is my formatlah. What is Voice over Print Relay…A diagram will show the difference between the two technology. Then (reading)please turn to Appendix for a brief description of (incomprehensible; technical terms to do with product in question). After all that..I give more information at the back (another page). Then …why the technology? This part is my recommendations…then who is the target market. Very simple.

(ON: The sample report, written by the gatekeeper/interviewee reflects the principles of report writing he has talked about. Something brief and straight to the point. Since it is a status report on two products, a product description was given but very briefly, mostly in point form. Simple language is used, mainly to briefly describe features of the products. The Introduction consisted of check marks/ticks. According to him, they are to indicate that he has carried out certain actions. But the report is for internal purposes so readily understood by colleagues. Report is very brief with the recommendations given more emphasis. More detailed description (maybe the ones instructors would ask students to include in the findings) were placed in the Appendix. This kind of approach, according to him, has always worked. Most interesting is his layout. The texts were indented on both sides (right and left) to allow for diagrams and illustrations.An element of originality/creativity there. This also reflects the importance he places upon getting the message through to readers).

I : Could I ask about the use of the passive versus the active voice in writing (Interviewer explains the meaning of the two terms as gatekeeper seems puzzled).

G : Microsoft Office tells you that but I've no clue what it is. You write like you talk. As long as it gets the message through! I don't knowlah. I don't care about these technicalities. If I can get the message through, that's the most important thing. If I have to start thinking about my format, type of language…then the gist of my paper is gone. I'm more concerned about my language. If I can …well, instead of saying 'this Business Model for this was done by…….' I'd just (referring to sample report) put a tick (on the word) Business Model . The shorter I can do it the better.

I : Suppose the report is for external purposes. Would you still adopt the same style?

G : Slightly different. The objective will still be the same. I need to tell the guy that this has been done, so, maybe instead of putting the tick mark first, I'd put a header (such as) 'Description: action done'. This will indicate to the guy that this is what I mean by the tick mark. Again I'm assuming that the guy knows nothing of what I'm talking about. My colleagues know what I mean…that the tick marks show that I did this(carried out certain actions). But outside people don't so I might have to format it (the report) differently.

I : **But still simple..(gatekeeper interjects: *'simple and straight to the point'*)..like you're talking (affirmation).**

Over the years we changed that approach somehow of using primarily passive language. But for Malaysians, boldness is out of the question. So phrases like 'I recommend', 'I write this' maybe is out?

G : Not for me. For the recommendation I never say 'it is recommended that'. I always say 'I therefore recommend'. Kadang –kadang some of my colleagues say 'why do you put that…' and I say 'hey, I'm putting my guts on the line. It's my work, I think it's going to work.'

(Interviewer continues with the written-up comments on criteria for reports: Visual support and others)

I : **(on other features: brainstorming) This one you do collaboratively? What other skills do you find necessary for you to be able to write an effective report?**

G : Be flexible, that's all. To me, just be flexible. Don't be too stringent, too tied to rules and regulations. Like I said, always look at the paper you're writing and who you're writing for. Never assume the best case. Always assume the worst case. But don't work at it too long or you'll never stop. If I start doing a paper, taking too long then my accuracy will change. My research now will be different next month. If you look at the research that's been done by all the big companies, it is always stated when the research was done and when submitted. So they'd say this is accurate until when. So you have to draw a line-this is where I stop. My data is accurate only up to this date. So you have to gauge – do your own calculation….

I : **So, in fact we could add another feature here, that is timeliness?**

G : (pause) yeh..timeliness….don't, don't dwell on it too long. But don't take too short a time. Give it (paper/report) some thought. Another thing is when brainstorming, never look down upon people's ideas.Look at every single option that you have. Be open-minded, be aggressive but know where your line is.

(Interviewer goes over questionnaire responses :probing questions)

I : **(on whether standards expected in reports applicable to fresh graduates)**
Your answer to this one is 'certainly'. So you expect them to be able to work, ready to write (affirmation from gatekeeper)

G : Yes, but they still have to be guided. Every company I went to, the expectations placed on written reports would be different. My first company…my first report I was told that I put too much in my paper without actually explaining in the Executive Summary what is the gist of the paper. So I went along…nobody told me that! How come nobody told me this. How come nobody taught me this? I tell them (his execs) not to give me figures but what do you understand by these?

I : (on question 6 to the response that gatekeeper/interviewee has not read any reports written by fresh graduates) Okay, maybe I can rephrase this. Your executives mostly have been with the company for more than two years?

G : Yes.

I : Are they local graduates? Do you know?

G : (pause)....the ones that I have.....fifty fifty- some foreign, some local.

I : How would you describe their skills - both general skills and report writing skills?

G : Well....fifty-fifty lah. Most of them don't know how to start. I categorise people - those that I call fresh starter and those that are confused-unsure. So I find the foreign graduated students tend to be better.......local ones will go 'what to do huh?' So they 'd spend a few hours or a couple of days saying 'how to do this? How, eh?' So I tell them –so you want results of the studies on customer service? So? What's the best way to get input? (exec's answer: 'so I must talk to my customer?') Every two thousand of them? (answer: 'No, that would be difficult') So I said 'what's the next best way?' So they start thinking. I have to guide them like that you know. But most of the foreign grads are okay. They know they need to do this- here are the results that I want. But what some of them don't do is they don't tell me what the figures they gave me mean. 'So, you want me to tell you what it means?Okay....Tell me what this thirty percent means? If I do this, how will affect my thirty percent? They don't always think of the next step. I always think of what I should do next. How can I be one step ahead of my boss?

I : The locals don't seem to have that skill?

G : They don't seem to.

I : How would you describe the writing skills of the local graduates?

G : They use too many big wordslah. Sometimes I know, they're trying to impress me- they use Thesaurus on the Netkan- what is that!

I : What about report writing skills?

G : It's not too bad. Sometimes with their status report they know enough how to make it short and simple. Sometimes I tell them I don't want it long – just short.

I : Some people say that local graduates lack the necessary language skills to be effective in the workplace. Do you agree?

G : Yeh. Most.

I : **Have you encountered any problems when they failed to write and you had to undertake the task of revising?**

G : Yes. I had to undertake the task of rewriting it. I have to do it. It takes more of my time. They just didn't know how to do it. They tried, not that they didn't. But they take too long so I said never mind let me do it.

I : **How then would you describe the report writing skills of your execs, the local grads? (goes over the choices given in the questionnaire)**

G : (chose 'Deficient)...majoritylah.

(gatekeeper goes over question 7 of questionnaire on the problems frequently encountered with the reports written by his execs)

G : Local grads – all are frequent problems (content, organization, language, style, format).

I : **Well, you may have your own way of describing the problems?**

G : Pretty much the same way. Very frequent. Local grads I mean. Foreign grads maybe a mixture of this (some frequent problems, some less, sometimes, seldom or never). Some local grads are not too bad. I'm talking about the majority of them. I find that Malays tend to translate word for word. They think in Malay and they write in English, so the thought process is not right.

I : **Can we talk about the Background of the report for awhile? This includes the company background...**

G : Oh, I would put that in my Introduction. Some part I'd put in my Executive Summary.

I : **What about Conclusion and Recommendation? Any specific things you want to say about that?**

G : I put in one place. To me, why do I have to put in two different places? I can have the recommendations and write 'therefore my conclusion is....'. The findings can be in the Appendix. Summarized findings can be placed in the Body of the report.

PRE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
GATEKEEPER 2

I – Interviewer   G – Gatekeeper   ON – Observational notes

I :   **What are your job demands? What do you do at your department?**

G :   In charge of legal and secretarial matters –drafting agreements, court cases….company secretarial matters…board meetings, AGM, organising that and preparing documents for that. Also personnel administration- payroll. I look after the HR side which includes training, welfare, disciplinary action..all that. I look into operations and methods. That means I'm responsible for the flows and procedures of the whole group, documenting…proposals, policies..that sort of thing – centralize everything. Okay…and also general administration of the whole group-dealing with suppliers, purchasing, buying, negotiating….looking at the general administration of the whole office such as the receptionist, despatch…..the whole building….

I :   **Okay. So you've stated here(in the questionnaire) all the reports that are relevant to your job…Tell me, please what basically is or are the functions of these reports? What kinds of managerial decisions will be made from them?**

G :   Okay. A proposal. A proposal is when you intend to do something. You propose a business. Okay. In that you normally set out the objective, how you carried out the research, your analysis and that you decide whether to go ahead with the business venture. It could be any kinds – either you want to increase value return, for example, here there's lots of data center so you want to increase the flow capacity so in need of new equipment. You have to write a proposal for that. Is it justifiable? If so, then we go ahead. Basically it's a tool for us to make decision. Normally for us to go ahead with a business. Joint venture, for example, that is to form partnership. Is it viable, that means can we provide something different? Can we in the end share the profit? So, it's basically for business decision. Informational…that's for maintenance.

I :   **Any other functions besides maintaining the well being of the company?**

G :   No. That's about it.

I :   **Analytical reports?**

G :   That is mainly technical. Sometimes we have a technical problem – we analyze… test…provide solutions.

I :   **Who writes these reports?**

G :   Kalau analytical mostly the ITs, you know engineers….mostly the engineers. Informational is more to Administration

I : **Senior Managers write?**

G : Yeh…Senior Managers and the engineers. Very factual. They analyze, they provide statistics….

I : **Okay. Roughly what proportion of the organisation's time is devoted to writing reports?**

G : Proposals will be monthly, maybe twice a month. Informational maybe the same. Analytical-once in a while. It's usually in response to something- something happaen or you know it's going to happen….Feasibility study is actually hand in hand with proposal-viability of a project.

I : **So has the frequency of writing and reviewing reports changed due to such changes like technological changes or say, economic downturn?**

G : Technological changes…depends; if it's a big one. Being in IT, the technological changes are frequent but that doesn't mean everytime you have to write reports.

I : **Well…in keeping up with that – with the changes.**

G : In keeping up with that…yes but it doesn't mean changes in the frequency of report writing. But with the Y2K – yes, we have to write analytical reports, you know with all the revamping, analysing, testing….that's quite long.

I : **Is it being done now?**

G : Yes.

I : **What about economic downturn? More reports? Less?**

G : More because you'd have to change your plans according to the economy. You have to study statistics and find out why things happened and try to find ways to counter problems.

I : **I gave this classification of reports as a guide. Does the organisation have its own ?**

G : No. Pretty much the same.

I : **So going back to the changes taking place, can your department cope with the writing demand?**

G : mmm…..basically a lot of the report that I've to do, lately…technological changes…mmm…not so much…economic downturn…okay but it's more like new business…think of new things to do….so….maybe we cannot cope.

I : **So you may not be able to cope?**

G : Yeh.

I : **Do you see the need for more trained personnel besides yourself?**

G : Ya. As it is now, there's a lot of things to do-lots of things to be studied- a lot of reports to be done. Let's say…what you have now, how can you make it better- to make us secure. Now it's security you know. Security not in terms of money but in terms of system. With the Internet nowadays, the business is wider – everyone can do it..can do the job. So whoever has the better idea and how to market it better will always win. So now we have to look into thatlah. How can we make our business more secure, how to make it more attractive, how to market it, how to price it, how to make it available, how to make sure it's efficient and cost effective to many people. Basically more research has to be done.

I : **Who do you foresee to be doing this?**

G : Ah….development wise, technology wise..it's the IT people. Basically IT and Marketinglah.Of course selling. Identify target market as well…it's basically marketing oriented affair and IT is suppose to support the marketing side of businesslah.

I : **(going over question 2 of questionnaire: frequency of RW activities)**
So these are quite clear. You read and write reports. You don't listen to presentation very often. Editing of reports is usually of your own or other Senior Managers or executives?

G : Not so much of editing but commenting and providing feedback. Usually someone gives a report and say 'this is my report…can you look at it', so then we would discuss such things as what to include, you should do this, spend more on this….

I : **What's the hierarchy like? Your executives write, you look at the report then you comment then you give it back to them? Or do you read the report, give that to other Senior Managers….**

G : Okay. If the executives do it, it will distributed around to other Senior Managers. If the SM do it, we distribute that among ourselves.

I : **That is you vet each other's reports?**

G : Yes, most reports.

(on Section II : RW skills)

I : So you stated here that RW skills is an important factor in your field. That's fine. Let's spend a bit of time on question 2, that is on the kinds of contribution good RW skills make to such areas as recruitment, staff appraisals and so forth. Maybe you can quote an instance when you have used RW as a criteria, perhaps in any of these….say job recruitment.

282

G : Well, it depends on the job functions. If the job functions require lots of reports to be written then that is importantlah. Normally when we recruit people, we don't know whether they can write or not. But it also depends…well like now if I want to recruit marketing people, I'd ask if they have experience in RW writing or just experience in writing. They have to show the product. Like the latest Marketing executive we hired, she showed the article that she wrote…you know something like a newsletter she wrote for her previous company. So we saw that she could actually do it…well that's important. Now on job promotion…well this one comes hand in hand with staff appraisal…business operation, yes, it's(RW skills) very important.

I : **Would you say that your response here is representative of the company?**

G : Ya. I would say it is the organisation's.

(on question 3: Important criteria for reports)

I : **Let's move on to this question. You stated that Content, Organization and language and Style to be very important.Format and Layout quite important. Basically everyone of these is important but in different degrees. I'd like to go on a bit on these criteria. Why are content, organization and language & style very important to you in assessing a report?**

G : Okay. Content is the 'meat' of the report. Organization is like your train of thoughts…I mean I can't put objectives last and conclusion first. So content is given high priority. I mean if it (the report) doesn't answer the question, no point. You'd want to see substance so content must be good. Organization is the flow of thoughts. It can't be disorganized, that is when you read, you don't have to figure out things, you know. You have that kind of thing your train of thought is noy quite right. Language is very important. Simple language is good…because to us, we don't have time to read long reports. Normally you have an objective in mind – a question in mind when you write. So you really, really have to answer the question. It's like this, you know. The content is the 'meat' to the whole thing and it's very important that the content is presented well. Language is communication and that is vital because language affects content. Then you can't get the message across. Even when in a report you have lots of statistics and all but that alone 's no good. It's how you present the information.To get approval…like in my case to get approval on a yearly calendar, you know to declare certain days a holiday, I have to present that convincingly.That's when language comes in. Simple language though – of course we have IT jargons and legal terms..that's okay but simple language is good and style too. We're not writing Literature so I don't look for flowery language.

I : **Okay. Let's talk about the criteria on Language for awhile. I need to know something important so I 'll be direct and frank. Now, the Marketing Manager finds Language to be quite an important criterion, whereas you see that to be very important. Of course there's no right or wrong answer and that he is entitled to his own opinion but do you perhaps have an explanation for this? Does the way you see language job specific? A departmental thing?**

G : Well…..maybe. He probably interprets language to be words. Whereas…his reports are factual- he looks for new business-goes out to find business. I deal with lots of documents. In my writing there's lots of explanation and justification…say on why I'm adopting a new agreement. I don't just have to understand new agreements but summarise them. So…….

I : **Okay, good. To continue with this….**

G : Format and Layout is important here but it's more to visual. If the format is nice but the content does not make much sense, then that's no use.

I : **Okay. So for Content (on specific features of each criteria) - you wrote that content must be focused, answers the questions and objective. Data must be correct and concise. What do you mean by concise here?**

G : More to straight to the point…ah..

I : **It's not too elaborate?**

G : Ya.

I : **What about including explanation ?**

G : Explanation tu okaylah. What I mean is content is all there –point one, point two, point three, point four, five…yes you have to elaborate, you can't just write a line. You have to explain everything. Concise - it is like straight to the point, you know. I don't beat around the bush then get to the actual topic whereas you can cut out a lot of things.

I : **What about having things in point form?**

G : Point form is…is better- like point one, point two…(listed out) or in a table format. A table format is good but depending. Graphics if to prove a point is okay.

I : **What about audience. Is that an important feature to consider?**

G : Ah..first, we don't think about that too much coz our audience is actually the people here- among ourselves. We know who they are so our stand is the samelah. Once in a while, for example like now, we're doing MSC application….so my audience is different now. So that means I have to do more elaborate explanation because they (third party) don't know what I'm talking about. If we do things for people within the company, we know basically what it's about. Basically, I don't have to explain much – and that means my report can be more concise. Right now my (inaudible) can take me quite a number of pages because the audience is different. So depending ….to whom. Internal or external. If external, I'll have to include explanation. My board of directors can be considered third party because they don't know operationals….

I : **What about degree of analysis?**

G : Well, we do have to analyse..ah…just so long it meets the objectivelah.

I : **What about approaches?**

G : What do you mean?

I : **Textbookish..over sophisticated.**

G : Textbooks? Do you mean whether I use them?

I : **Well, how do you see that?**

G : Ah….(hesitant) depending too. If it's legal in nature, yes I use certain kinds of books legal in nature.We are not so much into books, you know. We don't really consult books….we're not students….books are like history. Like Marketing and you want to do a market survey. That has to be what things are like now. Recommendations have to be based on the statistics now.

(FN: GK doesn't seem to be fond of sticking closely to books. Her opinion is in connection to her earlier comments (in one of the earlier discussions) that graduates lack the skills to apply their knowledge to actual on the job situations).

I : **Do you see technical competence to be an important feature of Content?**

G : In our business, yes because the online industry, that is IT related companies... well things are very technical. Actually I must say that apart from HR and administrative which is considered non-technical..but it is very legal, everything else is technical.

(FN: seems like GK is trying to put the point across that technical competence in HR also counts)

I : **Now, what you've just talked about on Content- would you say that it's specific to the HR department?**

G : No, it's not.

I : **And it's not just your own viewpoints?**

G : No

I : **Alright, for the organization of a report, you wrote that it must be in synch with content (interviewer reading written-up comments)Content must "jive". What sort of things must "jive" here?**

G : Okay. How eh? Okay, you have the content…and you have to organize it in a way, you know. It has to be…..(pause)..you know sometimes you see..ah…do not necessarily follows conventional ways of arranging content.

I : **Okay, mostly conventional (interviewer encouraging further explanation)**

G : But normally a report doesn't look like that. It has a certain style of..doing it. I don't know how to say this`. It has to be in synch . Everything has to be just nice - like when you read students' reports, they follow conventional way…well finelah, nothing wrong with that. But you see, things are out of place, somehow…

I : **Are you talking about coherence?**

G : Well, could be. It's like there's no….

I : **Natural progression..**

G : Yeh. No flow. Like they take a little bit here and a little bit there. And then he reads another book and include another part in. That's what I mean things have to "jive"- objective to content…you know.

I : **Now, in language teaching we call that synthesizing different sources. This means that you have information from different sources and you have to syntesize that-put them together- in a nice order. So from one point to another there has to be a natural progression. Would that be a correct summation of what you're trying to say?**

G : Yes, I think so. (chuckle)

I : **In terms of organization, do you list things in an order of most to least important sequence?**

G : Well, if it (a point) doesn't serve any purpose, don't put it in. It would just make the report longer and you feel as if you just want to make the report look nice. You can have – you should put the most important one first, but if the most important point doesn't serve any purpose, don't put it in. Even if it is the least important but it means something, like an example to show a fact, then put it in.

(FN: Perhaps here the GK was referring to relevance of the points included in the report)

I : **Right. Okay this point on Language and style – you said that there needs to be a little bit of style and initiative —you'll have to explain this one a bit, I think. What about things like sentence length and variety? Especially in reference to what you've said concerning Language and being simple and straight to the point?**

G : Okay, personally , when I get a report, I look at the first part and then the end part and then the middle because the middle part is usually the analysis. So, firsly I look at the objective and I look at the conclusion. So as far as sentence structure and how long the sentence should be, it depends on what you are explaining about. Normally I don't have reports that take me two hours to read. If there is such report then they are usually business proposalslah. For example, I have one setting up business in Singapore. That's really big so that would take me a long time. In fact, it doesn't take me one day-maybe two days…I read it –screen through- and then read it again and then I start asking

questions. If it is the normal standard report – half an hour or so before I start asking questions.

(FN: GK did not really answer the question. It's more hinting to the fact that sentence length and variety doesn't figure much (perhaps in the normal standard reports). Conciseness seems to be the expectation)

I : **Talking about the content again, what do you think about having an Executive summary at the beginning of the report? Is that a must for every report?**

G : Not a must, perhaps not for normal report but for proposals….normally there is one.

I : **On format and layout – you don't have a prescribed format?**

G : Not really.

I : **On this point – I remember in one of our discussions, you mentioning font and the way a report is typed and things to do with the Presentation of the whole report. Perhaps you could talk about these things, plus Format and layout, say, maybe under one term – Presentation?**

G : It's one of the criteria. Sometimes some people have this nice way of presenting reports, you   know-the layout, font. It does make a big difference lah.

I : **It does contribute to a more effective report?**

G : Mm..ya. Looks attractive.

I : **In reading reports for approval, do you have some kind of an assessment that the organisation uses for this purpose? A certain procedure, maybe?**

G : Mm..no. Maybe for proposals…depending on the nature of the proposal –if it is being sent to the management or the board..

I : **Do you have an assessment procedure to determine which goes up?**

G : You mean like marking?

I : **Yes, you can see it that way.**

G : No….maybe indirectly.

I : **What sort of things do you normally look for, then, for a report to get the approval from everyone?**

G : Well, basically the same thing – the objective, the analysis and recommendation.

I : **Say if I don't give this to you, that is provide you with these points, what criteria do you look for in a report for that to be accepted?**

G : What is a report that is an acceptable piece? Well, it has to serve a purpose. You don't write a report without an objective…so you write 'this report is written for what' and so forth. And then it will have a conclusion and recommendation. Even though the recommendation states that we should not do this, for example, that is not a positive recommendation – it is still an acceptable piece because in order for one to arrive at that recommendation, he would have gone through all the steps.

I : **So you won't be able to tell me in a sentence why a report gets to be accepted?**

G : Well, all those thingslah….

I : **Okay.**

(FN: The interviewer was trying to see whether GK has other criteria for report-other than the ones given in the questionnaire. This is quite important because the suggested responses in the questionnaire may be a little delimiting considering the close-ended nature of the questions. Thus it was important to draw some of the 'other' responses from the GK concerning standards/criteria for reports. It appears that the GK did not have any other different ones – or could not express them well enough?)

I : **What other skills do you see as necessary in writing a report?**

G : The ability to write. Some people, they're good, you know. They know what's going on but they can't write. I have here people who are good – they can carry out investigation but they cannot write. Write a proper report.

I : **Do you think that is language related?**

G : Not necessarily language. They just do not know how to do it. These people are good at investigating, doing research and all but they just don't know how to write the report – don't know how to write or just don't have the experience. To them it is such a big thing.

I : **Research skills?**

G : That's got to do with intellectual skills. Like what can I do to find out about these things – how, where and when to do it. Those that can do these alright but when it comes to writing it down-well that's language problem. Expression, I think. Not really language, expression problem-how they express things.

I : **Let's get back to question 5. Would you say that the standards expected are applicable to fresh graduates? Your answer for this one is 'At times'. Can you please explain this .**

G : What standards are you looking for?

I : **The standards that you go by in looking at reports – all the factors you've talked about.**

G : Okay (long pause).

I : **Would you say perhaps that it's okay for reports written by fresh graduates to be lacking in any way. They're fresh graduates, anyway. Or is it the case that you want these people to be able to start work –perform on the job as well as others?**

G : Well, we do want them to start work. We don't give them a chance-we cannot afford it. The ones that make a big impression usually move up. They are those who come in, they can work , they can write. Actually, I expect more from them. So I shouldn't put 'At times'?

I : **Well, that's up to you. Maybe you didn't get what I meant the first time around. Basically it means that for fresh graduates, you'd give them a chance if they don't come up to your expectations, as far as written reports are concerned.**

I : **For question 6 you stated that the reprts written by fresh graduates are usually deficient. What particular features of the reports, if you can recall from those you have read, that lacking.**

G : Mmmm(pause) Probably their writing skills because they don't have the language. When they don't have the writing skills and the language is a little lacking, the reports become vague and nothing came out of it.

I : **So it's true then that language affects the content?**

G : Yes.

I : **So language is lacking most in these reports? (affirmation). So quickly going over this question (question 7) – for Content, you put it to be a 'less frequent' problem in the reports.**

G : Mostly the content is okay.

I : **Organization is a problem.**

G : Their train of thoughts not there.

I : **Language..**

G : Language is a problem so that's why I chose 'frequent'. Style is definitely out and Format can be a problem. Style is boring.

I : **Very textbookish, are they?**

G : Yes. You see you have to be up to date, you know. Some reports very old fashioned. So style is lacking. The thinking is very restrictive. If the textbooks say there's five points to include –one day you want to go globalization- they (writers/fresh graduates) still think of the textbooks. They want to put all the five points in despite telling them otherwise. Depending on the situation –most reports are situation-based- you cannot put in some of these points. You either have to expand upon the points or delete some. That's why sometimes the organization is bad because they want to put all the points in one report. The report will get confusing, somehow.

I : **What usually happens when you get these reports? Do you undertake the task of revising them yourself?**

G : Sometimes I do.

I : **Okay. Could I ask if your responses here are representative of the organisation? (affirmation)**

I : **Okay, and they are not restricted to your department? (affirmation)**

End of interview.

APPENDIX N

POST INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
REPORTS EVALUATION
GATEKEEPER 1

I - Interviewer   G – Gatekeeper   ON – Observational notes
                                                 FN – Field notes

(Italicized phrases – words/phrases taken/quoted from students' reports)

I : I have one simple question before we start going over these reports. Do the conform to the criteria you look for in a written report?

G :   No.

I : All of them ?

G :   Yes. I think one looks a little okay.

Report 1: A Report on the Direction of the Internet in Business Environment

G :   First of all they've got it all wrong. I think in general, when they wrote this they didn't come and ask you what does this guy really wants. They just look at it and assume that this is what I think he wants. They didn't ask what is it that the reader really wants when assigning this kind of topic. First mistake is they did not clarify what needs to be done. Here is what they think should be done. That's not right.

(FN : perhaps one limitation in this study: no direct link between GK and students in that they did not get the chance to ask.)

(on page 1: Introduction: Background)

G :   (reading a sentence) '*The business environment is getting the world's attention*'. What business environment is he talking about? It's too general. "*It is important to study the pattern of Internet usage in business*" This sentence has no relation to the sentence preceding it! What is he trying to say? (repeats the whole sentence). As I was reading this I said "Ah"? What is he saying? That's a part of the Background. It is really starting abrupt.

(on page 1: Terms of Reference)

G :   Terms of reference is irrelevant to whatever they're doing. Then they tell me the scope of the report…(reading) '*The report is based on market research and survey through*

*Internet for ten weeks. Besides opinions and comments… … …back up by conclusions made from market research'…*I have no clue what he's trying to tell me!

(on page 1: Findings :2.1.1 Marketing through Internet)

G :   This part I wrote 'this seems to be hanging. What anxiety are you referring to? What do you mean by talented?' There are many talented people out there but then he has not defined the word 'talented'. This part also the grammar is wrong. So after a while I start writing 'huh?' at places to show that I don't understand.

(on page 2:Findings: Marketing through Internet –Selling to Business)

G :   Again what is the relation of these two sections?. What are you trying to say here..(reading) *'About $5 million if Dell PCs are ordered this way everyday'* . I don't know what he's saying here. There's no relation ….plus I don't know why he chose Dell…out of the blue, you know..Dell. Why Dell? There's a lot of other companies. If I were to meet this group and say 'so you think Dell is the best one?' That's incorrect. Cisco is making 45 million a year. So anyway…

I :   **So the info is not up to date?**

G :   Yes. Not up to date. So I look at it - they did it in two months. Two months they can find out about this (Cisco). Here sentence structure - *'The Premier Pages cut Dell's costs by minimizing ordering orders, and they free its people to do things only humans can do'*. I've no clue what it means. I get the feeling that they use Microsoft - probably use thesaurus ….

(picks up a sentence to illustrate his point on using Thesaurus)

G :   (reads a sentence) *' Amazon.com founded in 1994 by Jeff Bezos as starting of a webstore… …famous for its happy customers, its burgeoing sales… …*'Hah?? Why not use 'high sales'?

I :   Simple words huh?

G :   Yes, simple words. Spelling is also wrong. Sometimes when the people use Thesaurus, the word doesn't connect with the sentence. Thesaurus will just tell you all the synonyms. Sometimes, if I'm luckylah, I can guess the meaning.

(FN: another example of the GK's preference for simple words is in the next paragraph where he had circled the word 'gleans' from sentence *'everyone knows that Amazon uses the data it gleans to make buying recommendation for its customers'*.)

G :   This part here - *'All this helps explain why Amazon. Com is not losing customer to its competition.'* Don't assume the reader understands what you're trying to say. This one *'Amazon is good that customers have little incentive to go through the trouble of signing up elsewhere.'* –I've no clue what he's trying to say.

(on page 3; Findings: 2.1.2 Networking)

G :   (picks a sentence) *'Functions of networking through internet become a major successful factor towards international business'* – this one sentence structure. And then here they use the word 'Vanguard' – just happily use this word; probably don't know what it means. This one – *'With this new technology to link a group of physically separate people, whole new working scenarios emerge'* – structure. Here a diagram would be good (referring to a statement in the report *'These two extremes can be categorized as value seeker or an economy seeker'*).

G :   (On parts of the paragraph) This one- *'There are few examples'*-grammar. This part I think they shouldn't make it (the subpoints)into a sentence. This is his point but he make it into a sentence.They should have this (the main points) in bold and this one (the descriptions) follow.

(FN: the GK suggested listing out the points. This is to do with Layout)

G :   This part is all plagiarism. This one (picks up a word used in the report) –*'shut up shop'*? the word 'close' better. All this part the question is (reads written comments) 'what is the purpose of these examples? How do they relate to the reader? Can you give any Malaysian examples?' - because you see they've taken everything from a book.

I :   So lacking in applicability?

G :   Yes.

(on page 4;Findings: point 2.1.1 Internet Security)

G :   (reads written-up comments) 'You must have taken this from your reference. Please do not do plagiarism. It's illegal and unethical.'

(on point 2.2.1 Internet tools in business: Microsoft)

G :   This one on Bill Gates, LEO –this one is also wrong!. Bill Gates is not a CEO. Check sources. But then what is the purpose of this paragraph? (reads the next paragraph which follows) *'In the internet Microsoft has made nice gains.'* What is nice gains? And then this one-*'with more than twenty million visitors in March..'* Are we referring to Malaysian site?

G : This sentence *'We discuss MSC basically in Malaysia'*-grammar here. This (referring to a word) is suppose to be 'world class' not 'word'. Sometimes they never check. Certain parts that I did not mark- I looked at them. But there's no point reading because they copied anyway. All this is copied (flipping pages: five to eight).

(on page 8; Conclusion: point 3.1 Fraud through Internet Marketing)

G : This one they started out with the heading Fraud Through Internet Marketing. So to me, what has the title 'Fraud' got to do with what you are mentioning here? There is no relation between this and the rest. Irrelevant. To me, a conclusion should be your views of the whole thing.

I : **So basically there's no relevance at all –the conclusions don't relate to the findings?**

G : Worse this one and this doesn't relate (on page 9; point 3.2.1 Microsoft as a disaster). He's saying that *'Microsoft is led the richest man in the world. Microsoft supplies operating systems and applications to just about every major company on earth'*. What has this got to do with…….this one (statement) is saying that it's (Microsoft) good but he's saying that Microsoft as a disaster!

(on page 10; Conclusion: point 3.2.1 paragraph 7)

G : Suddenly they used abbreviation('MSFDC'). What has this got to do with the topic? I don't even know what it is.

(on page 11; Conclusion: point 3.2.3 Electronic Problems)

G : (picks on a word in paragraph 3)..this one is 'de facto' not 'the facto'. You see they 're trying to use big words but not sure how to use it. After this, I didn't read anymore because I think everything's plagiarised.

(FN: GK goes straight to his notes at the back of the report and reads his comments on the report and some of his recommendation for improvement –refer page 15 for notes. He goes on to read what he has written in the Editorial worksheet. He states that the comments are applicable for all reports)

End of interview.

<u>Report 2: Report on the Internet in terms of Managing the Business Environment</u>

G :   I think they spent a lot on the report - cover and all....

I :   I gave them some money for that purpose.

G :   Oh really? How come some of them didn't use as much? Never mind. They used normal
        printer ya? Anyway...

(FN: His comments, although somewhat 'tongue in cheek' revealed his expectations on
perhaps the Presentation of the report – cover, print and so forth. Also revealed the
students' initiatives in producing a 'polished' piece).

G :   This one I read I got a little motivated, you know. The first paragraph I was saying 'not
        bad'. But I couldn't tell whether it's plagiarism or not. Anyway...... This is a good start.
        This one (sentences) has to be restructured a little...doesn't make sense...(reading
        intro.)...suddenly it started, you know, this particular part (reading the comment written
        in students' group report) , 'So?This is a hanging sentence. What are you trying to say
        here?' What kind of recommendation are you talking about?'

**I :   So, referring to what you've said about the Introduction, does this one give you the
        'juice'; the 'meat' to the whole thing?**

G :   No. But this part (the earlier part of the Introduction) okay. So I read on and then , oh no!
        it has started.

I :   What about the format?

G :   It jumps a little bit...there's no relation.....flow from this to this...there's no continuation
        from here (earlier part) to here (the last part of the Introduction.) : See Report
        Introduction

(on page 2: Findings)

G :   Out of the blue they wrote *'Findings'* and then *'Communication'*. (Gatekeeper reads his
        written comments on the report)...... 'What are you doing a research on. You have not
        given me any indication of what your report or proposal is all about. To have findings,
        you need a reason to investigate. What are you investigating?'

(FN: The gatekeeper's comments on this could be made in light of an absence of a
purpose statement or any kind of statement in the intro/somewhere in the beginning that
clearly explains or states the purpose of the report . The gatekeeper's feedback on this
is somehow in tandem with his earlier stand on the importance of a good, clear
introduction).

(gatekeeper continues evaluating the report)

G :   (pointing to problems at specific parts of the report)....Grammar.....grammar...then this one I'm asking 'Why do you choose Electronic Stock Trading as example?Why not e-malls?' You data should also include some information of 1999 1st or 2nd quarter results. Companies such as Etrade has been in existence since '98 and have been doing great. Check your resources'.

I :   **So , looking at the Content of this report, how would you describe their (the students') level of knowledge about the subject from their writing?**

G :   They......accepted whatever they read. They accepted too quickly. They're not thinking ......if they could only get 1998, okay 1998 enough. Now is already the third quarter of the year, they should have the data (recent ones). And you know, figures like this one –if they take from real one (source) - company like E-trade is doing great....so these figures do not tally with what I know...so I'm not too sure where they got that from.

(FN: The gatekeeper perhaps expected more from the students. Compared his knowledge of the subject to the students. Implies too that the gatekeeper took the report seriously, expecting real/actual data)

I :   **In terms of Content of a report; if you remember the features stated the other time, where does this figure?**

G :   I dunno. Maybe this is....this could be 'Presentation' – presentation to support what they're sayinglah. The graphics, the diagram, the tables, the charts...the presentation...so they (the figures given) don't say anything. Maybe this is related to the Content because diagram such as this, data such as this - it's already part of the content, maybe not Presentation. So, do a bit more; recommend a bit more. Get more updated, question a bit more. Don't just accept.

(on page 3: Findings)

G :   (on survey data- Demographics provided by students) They gave me this one - which is good but if I am to look at this, what does it tell me? So? What am I supposed to do with these figures? (reading comments) 'So? What does this tell me? What am I suppose to do with these figures? Aren't they other supporting results to add value to this report?' Another thing is, there is no source of data which is very important - such as demographics, internet usage etc... When I look at this I said So? Like 1% under 21 use the Internet. But where? Is it 1% in town? Could be 1% in the rural areas? So where?- demographics.Not enough data, y'know.Whenever you do a survey like this, you have to state your source of input. If it's your own, your own. If someone else's, you'd better say. In the States, you would get suspended coz this is considered suspect.

(on page 3: Findings: on point 2.3 Gaining and Maintain Competitive Advantage)

G :   This..not true. Corporate companies need to look into the future to be more competitive (commenting on a statement made : L 2-3 *Many companies tried to find an existing practices that can help them improve their activities*). To me – nowadayslah- if I start looking at existing practices, how long ....? (to survive).

(reads on, stopping at comments written alongside).....on L 10-11 *'Unfortunately, the small companies without the internet tools face difficulties in growing business and lastly are left behind'* – Why? There's no mention why. I understand this but someone else might not. Don't just assume that the reader would know what you are talking about.

(on page 4: Findings)

G :   Grammar.....this one too- (reading report)... *'talking over the phone was definitely save their precious time.....'* Untrue. What about UPS? Service is great and secure and fast. Existing technology like UPS, Federal Express are doing great so what they're saying here is untrue.

        'Collaboration' - out of the blue. There's no connection. How do you verify this? There are no examples. I think they took this point from a reference then tried to add one or two points...they 're not thinking just writing.

I :   The Conclusion?

G :   Repetitive. Recommendation too. No relation. Doesn't mean anything. Correct but there's no relation to Findings, does not help in any way.

I :   Why is that?

G :   Because it's not reccomendation. Just something taken from a book.Even the Conclusion. All in all, no flow, little connection between points.

End of interview.

Report 3 : Describe in detail the past, present and future methods of collaboration and communication

(On cover page – an illustration of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)

G :   They have a diagram (referring to illustration).......what has this got to do with the topic? Okaylah, to show that they are from UKM(chuckle)..there's no relation at all ....(laughs)...oh no...another one. Lepas tu I tengok –tebalnya (referring to the report) but after two...alamak...after two (referring to two different reports) I wrote these comments: 'All of the papers have the same general problems that I have stated in the first paper. It is very frustrating(laughs) going through the papers (refer Editorial Worksheet).

(on the Introduction, page 1)

G :   Umm..the Background....(reads comments written in the report) 'the Introduction does not provide me with any information about the paper. It does not relate to the topic or subject of the paper-what has telecommunication got to do with the topic. How is marketing involved in this. With this type of intro., I am not compelled to read on!'

(on Findings: point 2.1 Previous Communication in Marketing; subpoint 2.1.1 Products)

G :   Is this a definition (referring to the very first line)? If this is a definition say so.(reads written comments) 'Are you using Telekom as a case study?' coz when I read this I saw 'Telekom' and I went back and asked myself that. If you are using it then why?Why are you compelled to do this? (to choose Telekom) And then what is the point of this paragraph coz he's talking 'bout every historylah....whas this got to do with products?(reads his comments on the third paragraph under the topic Products) 'What has this got to do with the heading?' TQM....what has got to do with Products?He has not relate, y'know...not that they haven't relate from paragraph to paragraph – they have not relate to what they're saying here (to the topic on Products) because TQM doesn't come with the history... (paragraph 2) - doesn't relate. So the train of thought is not there.

(FN: It is quite difficult to say, for certain, what the gatekeeper means when he says 'no relation' and to interpret clearly what he's saying were weaknesses of this section of the students' report. Most likely his comments refer primarily to the second paragraph and the third paragraph where there appears to be little link between them. The second paragraph talked about the history/ advent of the telephone lines(again, it is not clear whether the students are referring specifically to Telekom). The third paragraph began with the sentence 'The quality of the product is the main priority' and went on to mention that there was renewed emphasis on global quality movement, citing TQM, with specific reference to Japanese firms as example. Therefore both paragraphs put together alongside a very brief, three liner definition as an introductory sentence- the whole text missed the mark- did not address the subtopic i.e Products).

(on page 3: Findings; point 2.1.2 Product Priced)

G :   Product Pricing –not Product Priced –doesn't fit the definition (L1-3 –'Price is the amount of money charged for the product or service...that consumers were charged for the benefits of having or using the product')....so I skipped this part. This sentence is hanging. If you read this - 'Some of the factors included the company's marketing objectives, marketing mix strategy and economic conditions.' So?

(on point 2.1.2 Objectives)

G :   This part...(reads sentence) 'They believed that the company with the largest market share enjoys the lowest costs and highest long-run profit.' So I said (reads his comments) 'what are you trying to say here. Is it based on economics of scale where the bigger the production, the lower the cost?' He's assuming that I know what he's talking about which is the economics of scale. But he has not mentioned it – just said 'They believe'. Does he know what he's talking about? I don't think he does.Ehmmmm...(pause) if he wants to put elasticity and some other points he canlah but no pointlah - it doesn't fit the title...

(Interviewer probes further.)

I :   **If he wants to put it in, say...it has to carry...to bear some point ..**

G :   Yes, correct.

I :   So this point is not really necessary unless it's something substantial for readers to fall back on?

G :   Correct. Correct. Why is it like that. Don't assume I know. Why don't you go back and ask this people(students) what the economics of scale is.

(ON: Probing seems to be necessary at this point because the interviewer observed that from the start the interviewer had been giving comments that were elaborate but somewhat vague at places. Interviewer felt the need to probe upon these areas as gatekeeper did not seem to find the right words to describe the mistakes students made in their report).

G :   All this is is Past Tense and I was asking myself why. Past tense at every place.....maybe he thought this is all previous practices, you know. This one (comments on sentence in report)....your sentence structure is not so good.

(on page 3: Findings; point 2.1.3 Product Placement)

G :   There - 'used' again (in reference to Past tense usage). I don't know what this means (referring to a question mark he put beside the introductory sentence *'Most producers used intermediaries to bring their products to the market. They tried to forge a distribution channel. It helped to cpmplete transactions.'*) I don't know what is the purpose of this definition. (comments on a part where students gave difinitions of five terms following the introductory statement above)

I :   These are just mere definitions to you?

G :   Yes, definitions. At first this (pointing to introductory statement) and suddenly definition for 'Information'......(so forth)....I don't see the purpose of all this. Having definitions is good – I'm not saying it isn't but state the reasonlah.

(on page 5; continuation from point 2.1.3 Product Placement)

G :   This part is the same as the other one. So I wrote 'huh?' (points at places where he wrote 'So?') So what....so what?...

(FN: His comments are made in reference to the diagrams of distribution channels and another related diagram titled 'Figure 2 shows a hybrid channel' which were included without much explanation. The gatekeeper's resentment towards this has to do with his belief that diagrams given must explain a point. If he has to decipher everything, then the diagrams, statistics, charts etc. are of no value (refer criteria for reports)

I :   So going back to your comments earlier, those diagrams do not support any point?

G :   Yes

I :   **They don't explain anything?**

G :   Yeh…but even if they do, right, say this one…though I think it doesn't…they should at least support …some supporting write up is needed. If I have to try to figure out, no pointlah. I have no time to try and figure things out.

(on page 8;Findings)

G :   This one sounds good though I think they copied (point 2.1.4 from pages 6-8). This one also, so what? Again so what, so what ?(flips pages). Don't think I didn't read, you know. I still read the whole page…(continues pinpointing to specific parts of the reports…)so what?

I :   **So, the 'so what' means….**

G :   So what…what's the purpose of all this? This one…(reads comments) 'Are you copying this out of a book?' At worst case, summarize it! After this, I got angry so I didn't read on.

(on page 9: Findings; point 2.2 Present Communication in Marketing; Subpoint 2.2.2 the Changing of Marketing Environment)

G :   What are you saying here…(picks on the first sentence) ' *As more toward from past'*….I think what he's saying is 'As we move forward'. That affects everything coz when I read this I have to figure out…okay, he's talking about…the movement…then it makes sense. You see, this one he took from the book. This one he did it himself. He's combining the book and his opinion. Anyway, (reads on) '*the present communication still uses the 4Ps tool to upgrade the marketing strategy'*. Like I told you before there is now in the new digital economy, unofficially two more Ps, that is people and pain. This one I thought I just point that out to them.

I :   **So, pain is?**

G :   Pain is your competitorslah. Like just when you think your marketing strategy is awesomelah; other guys give it for free.

I :   **Other people's are better?**

G :   Yes, better. So Pain is that. People is your staff.

(on page 10 –12; Findings for Present Communication in Marketing)

G :   So again, 'So?'….'So?'…doesn't tell me anything. Out of the blue…say from 2.2.3…the students went off and talked about other things. This one is about Telekom…either they got from Telekom website or….they got from brochures from Telekom…

(FN: The gatekeeper's response to those pages were rather negative pinpointing to his 'So?' comments. This may be due to his dissatisfaction over students' writing that

consisted of points by points, definitions by definitions that were general. Even more when there was evidence of plagiarism.)

G :   So, there's no, there's no relation. There's no purpose, you see. And then they go to Conclusion. This one I have to tell you that I skipped. Doesn't tell me anything at all. At all.

I :   Doesn't relate to the findings?

G :   No, doesn't.

(on page 15; Recommendation.)

G :   (picks on a phrase –'*management should provide 'a good service'*) Define 'good service'. You mean I'm the one who should define my 'good service?' You're the one who should be telling me..

I :   So substantiate the word 'good'?

G :   yes, coz if you are the MD, or some Manager you say the company should give good service – I,I think I have good service! What do you mean by this?

I :   Be specific on the type of service that should be implemented?

G :   Yes. Define. How do you measure..if it was bad before, how? Tell me, did the customer ran off? I cannot say "I think it's good, I think it's bad'. Like this one- Lost Customer Analysis (point 4.4) What is Lost Customer Analysis?So? If I do a Lost Customer Analysis, what will it do for me?They (the students) just tell me what it is.

I :   So, what you're saying is to monitor the customer loss rate and say what kinds of monitoring?

G :   What kinds of monitoring, what would it achieve, how do I benchmark it, what are the mechanism.

I :   Very specific. To help you...

G :   Yes, if I have to start thinking…if I say that a Lost Customer Analysis is a good tool to use – okay so how do I do it? It has to be to the point that when the the MD looked at it and say, okay this is good. Go for it. They can't be saying okay let's discuss about it first……

(Gatekeeper reads overall end comments: see Report)

G :   If I you're a Marketing Manager, okaylah at least I know that you know all this traditional means but I want to explore something new to make my marketing strategy better. Here, they have given me some but there is no indication of how the new technology can help.

I : **I suppose you have somebody like this working for you, would you say that alright, they are new. They might not have learned this so you would help them out?**

G : Yeh, I'll have to guide them. I'll be telling them . Fortunately I don't have to read this kind of reports everyday. Once in a while saja.

(Gatekeeper continues reading end comments: see report). End of interview.

<u>Report 4 : A Report on Online Service in Malaysia</u>

G : This one I took it in a more sensitive way because they chose Fishnet. First part's okay-there's a summary (Executive summary). (Reads first part) *'This report is written to know more about the online systems.'* What online systems?(continues reading) *'This report is take..'*should be taken 'from the Internet. Okay so if they took from internet, where's the reference. Put the 'url'here. Again, I'm not very clear what they're saying…(as to the purpose of the report). There's actually nothing much here.

(on the Introduction.)

G : A the very beginning here you can tell that they don't know what they're talking about.What are you talking about? Why are you telling me about PLC (Product Life Cycle)? Relate to Fishnetlah!

I : **Wrong content?**

G : Ah. Wrong content. After that I just skipped (skipped all pages 1-4) and I said 'What is the purpose of explaining this?'

I : **Wrong content. What kind of content do you expect?**

G : Okay. As someone who knows nothing of the Fishnet…….at worst case they should tell you what is Fishnet. What are the services. So the reader reading it will say, okay this is about a financial related service industry. That's the Introduction. Actually,…(goes back to previous pages)..if you go look, everything 's in the book.

(on page 5: Findings; Findings on online in Malaysia)

G : And then…suddenly…Findings on online in Malaysia?? And then their content 2.1.1 Accelerent?? I thought you were writing on Fishnet?I think Accelerent is a company…it's a group of…I can't remember.

I : **Is it a product?**

G : It is a product? When I read this I thought it's a company…you know…the point on rental agreements…I thought it was a company serving…then I thought about Fishnet and then this….what??I lost all motivation to read on.

(on page 6: Findings; the Useful of the Online)

G :   Again, the useful of the online…what? Like this one (point 2.2.2)…Secure Server Online Commerce Services. There's no such things in Fishnet all these. I don't know whether they thought about all this. This one, you know, (referring to a term used in the report – 'Fishcart') my friend read and he said, 'You notice that Fishcart..Fishcart…the students actually took…this is my best betlah from his reference…(checks on references but there was none)…anyway, this is shopping cart SQL. He got it from some website – e-commerce shopping cart coz all this is explaining e-commerce shopping cart. But if you ask him what is SQL, he probably won't know. Everything else after this part I know would be irrelevant (pages 7-10) so I skipped. Totally irrelevant. And then this point on Financial Contents- Online Secure Commerce Transaction. It (Fishnet) doesn't provide online transaction yet. Fishnet has never provided online transaction. Right now, Fishnet is providing Contents only. Online transaction later on. We have not publicized it. We only mentioned it…never said we will do transactions. So they assumed that and went straight to Online Transaction Overview. This is all copy. This one..if they copy, it goes back to the objective –there's no relation. You don't put your own view. I don't need all this. I can read it myself .

(Gatekeeper flips pages where he thinks there is evidence of copying).

G :   Suddenly…PGP (page 12; point 2.3.3.4) If you read all this…everything is copied…rubbish.

I :   **This, to me comes from someone who doesn't know the topic very well.**

G :   Yeh….that's right. As a third year student…these people…are they third year students? They …actually waited a week before….at least the other three had bibliography. I mean, it's obvious. When I was reading the reports, I left this one till the end. When I was studying, the professors taught me, forced me to compare and make my own recommendations. He said that assume that you are providing to the President of Russia…the President of China..I don't care how thick it is…so if you give this to an MD of this financial online company, he will just flip and throw it away. So it's wasted, whatever two months that you had (to produce the report). No point.

I :   **So, you expect better from second year students?**

G :   Slightly better than this (report)

I :   **They are now in a three-year program, so next year is their…**

G :   Final yearlah. This (the report) is a lie.

I :   **Language wise?**

G :   Totally plagiarised.

I :   **Talking about the content. Do you think there's enough information out there to help them write?**

G :   Oh yes…Fishnet has its own website.When you talk about Fishnet, they will know that this particular company provides the service. They would have gone and find out.

I :   **You want an Economics graduate to know these things?**

G :   They are business students. It's a business paper. What's the topic again? Ah! I expect more especially if you're a final year student.

End of interview.

Report 5 : Market Research on financially related product – MYOB Software

G :   This one gives me some hope. They explained to me in the intro what they wanna do, what is their purpose, what they're going to do, what are their methods, who they interviewed….some background - the history of MYOB….so this one renewed my hopes…(chuckle). Now I know what they are talking about. If I don't know about MYOB, I know now….(flipping pages)..they talk about types of software…..at least I know.

(on Findings: Introduction on the Selling Product; point 3.2)

G :   This one..a diagram would be good. By reading all these, I know what MYOB is. Now the sad thing about all this is……at the end of the day - so what? You want me to buy the product? What are you trying to tell me? This is one report I think that has the flow, it has the right content, it explains a lot but so? What does it do for me? Maybe he's trying to say…use this productlah.

I :   **That is not made clear here?**

G :   Nope. They just explained they're gonna do this and this…

I :   **So the product doesn't really apply to your line of business?**

G :   No. So far I gave this the highest mark. I gave it a 3.

I :   **Possibly not acceptable.**

G :   Yeh…possibly not acceptable….but the flow is there. As to whether they copy…I don't see any.

I :   **That's a pity…**

G :   Yes. At first when I looked at this, it looked as if they actually went to the people and talked to them. They actually provide the reference from the Net. The sad thing is- so what? The flow is there but so what? You want to compare this (product)….? I don't know why they chose accounting software or why MYOB- but I put that aside…

I :   **What product software would you like to read about?**

G :   Well, financial related products-why accounting? If they don't know they (should) ask.

(on page 12: Recommendations)

G :   Here they have the recommendations…which is good. They're more to advantages of using the product. But tell me how the company can benefit from this.

(FN: Perhaps GK 1's finds the report to be well written as far as language and organization are concerned, but could make little use of the information contained in it, as far as organisational decision making is concerned. Informational but lacking in application for online service industry. This kind of expectation may be characteristic of an analytical report).

End of interview.

POST INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
REPORTS EVALUATION
GATEKEEPER 2

I – Interviewer   G – Gatekeeper   ON – Observational notes
                                                 FN – Field notes

(italicized phrases – words/phrases taken/quoted from students' reports)

Report 1 : Long Life Insurance – Dead-end Crisis

I :   Did the reports you marked conform to the criteria you set forth?

G :   No.

I :   Not even one?

G :   Well, this one on Dead-end Crisis, maybe. I can see an effort here. They tried to put in
        their own words….but they go round and round in circle. When I read this there were
        places that…hey I thought they've already written this part? They kept repeating the
        word 'dead-end'. Almost 20% of this sentence contained the word 'dead-end'. In the end,
        because they used so many of the word 'dead-end', it's almost like going round in circle.
        Then they lost their focus. They kept on repeating…

I :   The content is not focused?

G :   It's quite focused. They have an idea what the whole thing is about. I think probably
        sentence structure or expression. They kept going back to the same point. If you have a
        look, this one can be shortened. The whole thing can be shortened. They were probably
        trying to make it long, to expand it, right? They repeat either to make it longer or they got
        confused along the way. I can see some effort. Language, sentence structure quite bad.
        Expression, grammar, spelling too. Okay, like using 'we', 'I'-might not be too good.

I :   Well, they identify themselves with the company?

G :   Because you do things for the company….the company should be stated. So informal and
        then not consistent.

**I :   So on the subject of formal and informal, how about passive sentences like 'it is
        recommended'. 'it has been seen'…do you want to see more of those kinds or there
        are some active sentences…?**

G :   What do you mean by active?

I :   Like 'I recommend' or 'the company has taken steps'

G : That's okay. It doesn't matter which. But in this case, it should be 'the company recommends'. 'We' is okay but not so in the beginning (Introduction). Also, be careful with facts. KL is in KL. PJ is in Selangor (pointing to mistakes in report)

I : Wrong facts.

G : Yes. Be careful with facts – and be consistent. If you use numbers –numbers. If you use words, then words. This one some words some numbers.

I : How tolerant are you of grammar mistakes?

G : Sensitive.Quite sensitive actually. We don't expect floral language. Just simple language. That's why keep it simple.

I : And structurally correct.

G : Yes..people's mistakes in grammar or expressions – especially at expressions. If you say it wrongly people got it wrongly, you know.

I : With this report, you wrote here that the style is average. What do you mean by average?

G : Same old thing.

I : Flat?

G : Ummm....yah, flat probably because of the expressions. They were getting all confused here because they're too many statistics; too many percentages. To better present your points, if too many numbers are involved, too many percentages, use a table.Here, they put at the back – there's no point. You should put it here (in the findings) and explain what the table/statistics is all about. This one they expect the reader to think and interpret what they are trying to explain. The way how this is presented, the reader cannot think anymore and the explanation goes on and on.

I : Long-winded?

G : Yes, long winded. Sometimes it is better to put tables rather than long winded sentences. The reader will be lost – lose track and lose interest too. They put the tables at the back of the report but no reference is made to the table nor any justifiable explanation. They can take this graph and put it here and explain – easy. There is a flow.

I : Would you say that the Layout is not creative?

G : Yes, no creativity and initiative. All the reports here look the same – same style. And this makes the whole report flat.

I :   **Looking at the content again, does it give you much to go by? Does it give you the information that you need?**

G :   No. The content itself is OK. But the conclusion is not right. The conclusion is only a summary of the content. In fact, the first sentence of the conclusion comes from the beginning of the report. So it is not a conclusion.

I :   What would you have liked to see?

G :   A conclusion is not a summary. I think everybody thinks a conclusion is a summary.

I :   **Summary of the findings.**

G :   They took one sentence from that (findings) – not even a summary, like this.

I :   The recommendations?

G :   Pretty much the same thing as conclusion…

I :   Nothing much?

G :   Umm…okay, I can see…okay, not bad, not bad. But they should be expanded a bit more.. Now you are recommending, fine. So, what do I do with it? What is the procedure? What are the criteria for you to be able to choose A or B ? (referring to student's example on two options to solving dead-end crisis). None of that here.

I :   So, more specific things, yes?

G :   Expand….have to to be more elaborate. Explainlah. What is the procedure of doing this? Are you talking about the customer or the employer. Actually here they have gotten a bit out of line. All along they've been talking about employee facing the crisis but this one (recommendation) I'm not too sure what they are referring to.

(more on the recommendations)

G :   Like this one on opening a branch. Easily they are recommending opening a branch in Ipoh. In making recommendations, being clear is one thing. You have to take theory and adopt it. That's what this is all about – they strictly follow theory without thinking. What about cost factor? Feasibility study? Is there demand there and so forthlah.

I :   **So basically, in order to recommend something they have to elaborate on ways, in what form…**

G :   Okay. Theories can provide ten ways of providing a solution but are they workable? Every ten of them?Like here they said create more positions– I think this is not feasible(reads from text) *'There are several positions that can be created for efficiency purposes'* -you know in creating more levels like this will only make things worse. More levels your checking mechanism is more than once. That's how you create red tapes, bureaucracy and all. Like in the government sectors there are many levels so to pinpoint

faults will be difficult. Ownership is difficult so there's red tapes – is that what you want in your company? Suppose they say that to minimize red tapes is by specialization, that is one specialize in one thing only – I see it as bringing about another dead-end situation.

I : **Given these kinds of recommendations and the mistakes that students made, what do you think is lacking? Is it knowledge?**

G : They did not analyse the situation. Why someone ask you to write a report is when you have a problem or you want to prove something. So the situation is already there. You have to think of ways to make it better. So with the students, there is no situation analysis here- what is currently happening now and what can we do about it? Present several options and what is your recommnendation.

I : Do you think these students would be able to do this?

G : I think they can. They just have to think. They tried, I can see.

G : This one you know (picks on a phrase) – *'With the action followed up towards action pointed during the appraisal'* – they wanted to put things in their own sentence that they got it all wrong. Actually they copied from a book and they tried to rearrange the sentence and the wording. Ended up getting stuck. This one (looking at the questionnaire in the appendix) – *'burden job'* –I asked myself what is 'burden job?'

I : Okay. In terms of Content, does this report answer the question?

G : I think they did- up to a point of just answering the question but it doesn't have much application. Application is the most important thing not theory, you know. They answered the theory part only. It's like in schools - the teacher ask one question, they answer that one question.

I : Is this concise?

G : Actually they could write this(referring to some parts of the report) in two pages. Actually with report it's not the length that counts, it's what's in it.

G : These students have problems with spelling. No spelling check?

I : **Lack of time to check, maybe. Because in this course they do lots of things – negotiations, meetings and all..**

G : That is why even more so that they should be concise.

I : So you accepted this with some improvement yes?

G : In real life they won't accept this, you know. I accepted it because they managed to answer the question. But application none.

I : Maybe it's because they're not really working for the company so...

G :   No,no, no, no. It's got to do with thinking. In Australia, Form One students are expected to do such things. Theories can give you ten points, you know. You can disagree with them. It seems here they agreed to everything...

I :   **So I remember you wrote in the questionnaire that one should be flexible and not be too stringent when writing. Is this what you mean?**

G :   Yes. They can say we recommend this but here are the implications. At least there's implications.

End of interview.

Report 3: ISO 9000 certification process available in Malaysia &How it is applied to financially related industries.

G :   Reading this report made me want to cry. Very textbook like. Doesn't answer the question from the very beginning - doesn't say how it can be done (ie. How ISO 9000 can be applied to financially related industries). They didn't make a reference to financial industries.

(FN: The gatekeeper's comments on the idea of 'making reference to the industry in question' may mean that there needs to be a statement/part that clearly indicates that the reports/the topic addressed is related to financial related industries. There is no indication of this in the students' report. In reference to GK I's comments on intoductory statements in the reports, we can probably see a trend that as far as Introductions are concerned, there has to be a clear, explicit (maybe) statement there somewhere that tells readers the gist or simply the purpose of the investigation). Very long winded, too general and even more so 'textbook like' introductions seem to be unacceptable).

(ON: Gatekeeper seems very hesitant. Answers/initial comments were very deliberate, perhaps trying to find words to express weaknesses in the reports. Flips back page to page)

I :   **(probing) Well , they've given you some background information in the intro....**

G :   Yes...they give me the history of ISO 9000, the word origins and all..that's fine (long pause). They should explain here (gatekeeper goes back to first page and reads a part : '*the scope of ISO is not limited to any particular branch;it cover all technical fields except electrical and electronic engineering.......*')...from there I can tell that they don't know. This, you'll find in all ISO documents - and this is referring to technical fields...They (the students) should say that 'even though ISO is mainly for the engineering field, it can be applied to a service company...can be applied to financial related companies.

(FN: Interesting! again, something that closely relates to context;something 'spot on' to the topic/issue addressed – application; to apply what one has read to the actual situation. Gatekeeper made a comment on the ability to apply knowledge in previous interview/discussion).

G :   Always make a reference to the question. In this case.....out of nowhere... for example (flips to page 2 on Findings and reads)... *'the format of the credit card, and "smart" card that have become commonplace is derived from ISO.....'* and then *'such features as an optimal thickness (0.76 mm)'*.... *'means that the cards can be used worldwide.'* They've gone off topic.

(on page 3: Findings – point 2.1.3 Why is International standardization needed?)

G :   Why is international standardization needed –fine –why it's needed. I want to know what it's for....fine..aah.....(pause) *'International standardization is well established for many technologies in diverse field....'* Aah? I want to know whether I can do it or not (rising intonation)!I want to know...okay, my main concern is.....I want to get certified, alright. What is the process like in Malaysia, tell me and what the things I can get. So basically what I'm looking for is...just definelah..fine, which they did, finelah...but they did too much copying....how many levels available in Malaysia, okay, and what is it called in Malaysia.It's not ISO 9000 in Malaysia. Okay, say there's four (4) – 9000, 9001,9002, 9003- briefly describe each one and tell me which should I take and why. It's not one (9001). Most likely 2 (9002). Not 3, not 4. 4 (9004) is for Environment, 3 is for something else.For service industries...which and why.

I :   **Straight to the point?**

G :   Straight to the point. What I'm looking for is for them to explain to me ..(inaudible)...briefly, the four available in Malaysia –which one we should go for. The students never said this. (picks on examples students gave and reads) *'The ISO film speed code, photographic equipment'* what's all this ??

(on page 5: Findings – point 2.2 Steps to Certification)

G :   Steps to Certification...(mumbling)..not really steps for it.

(on page 5; Findings - point 2.3 The certification process)

G :   And this one is repetitive (flips previous page). I mean ...they always repeat themselves, you know.

I :   **Is that language problem, organization... you think?**

G :   Understanding. They don't understand so they don't know what to organize. Or they took a bit here and there. This part I can see that they took from two books

I :   **Is the content correct?**

G :   It's correct. Nothing's wrong with the content. Content is correct but it just doesn't answer the question. This part they really copied everything from somewhere (pages 6-9). You go and look at my notes you'll find the same thing. They did not apply..they did not understand so…

(on page 10 : Findings – point 2.4 The list of companies in Malaysia awarded ISO 9000)

I :   **There's this list of companies….**

G :   Did I ask for it? The list of companies - unless you wanna make a reference to them, do it. Okay, like…a couple of companies with ISO 9000 –how do they do it? How do they approach? Not just a list. It doesn't do anything for me.

(FN: gatekeeper wants information that is useful to her –that can be used to help her decide)

(on page 11: Conclusions)

G :   Conclusions –this is a repeat from previous pages! Again they repeated (flips to the next page)…again they repeat!
(on page 14: Recommendation)

G :   Okay, then..careful with statistics. Substantiate (picks on a part in the recommendation section where students gave a bit of statistics). This they copied from an American book…I can tell from the example… Defence and F.D.A- that's clearly American. So this is their recommendation…(pause)The recommendation should be ' as a financial related company, we should go for ISO 9002.. All this…not relevant. Oh, cost, cost analysis not included? Do a cost analysis – in order to do this, we will need this much, this much. Management just wants to know about cost, that's all.

I :   **Can you comment on the organization of points? You said there's some repetition…**

G :   Repetitionlah. If you look at the following pages - repetitious..

I :   **Language?**

G :   **I cannot comment on the language. Copy from the book.**

I :   **Presentation. Remember, you made a comment last time on font …**

G :   **Boring…Times Roman (chuckle).As if they can't use others. Were they told not to?**

I :   **Oh, no, no.**

G :   Then why I see the same font being used?

I :   I don't know. Maybe they thought that this is it. It does look very basic. What exactly bothers you about Times Roman?

G :   They do use word right?The files give several different ways of report format. I dunno.

End of interview.

Report 3: Report on the necessity of having a formal salary structure.

G :   (picks on cover page) Oh, for the *'Human Recourse Manager'* (laughs). This report – everything's from books.

I :   Which books, ya?

G :   Many books.

I :   **So this report is not acceptable. Cannot be relied on for organisational decision making.**

G :   Doesn't give me anything.

I :   **Despite the theory? Is it not that you'd refer to books or documents for ideas on a new salary policy? What some people have done? Can you create your own policy?**

G :   Yes. There's guidelines –why not?

I :   **Okay, Can you comment on the Content.**

G :   Well , the report is very thick. He's going round in circle. Did not answer the question. Very general.

(on page 1: Introduction- Background)

G :   First the background is a repeat from 1.1(Terms of reference)

I :   **Is the Introduction good enough, though. Does it make you want to read on?**

G :   At first, yes.But when it got to the background..oh..oh. After that I see that the rest is like the book.

I :   **Can you pick one part to explain what you mean.**

G :   Well, it's not an exam question, you know. You don't have a salary policy, right. So you have to recommend some things. I expect you to go out and do some research, read some books come back and summarise. But like here, I ended up reading the books.I feel like I'm reading a book. You see that's the problem. I'm reading a book.

(on page 17: Findings – point 4.5; Company Operation Rule)

G : Did they actually go to this company and do this?

I : **I don't think so. But they took the cases hypothetically.**

G : The report has many repetitionslah (of points). I don't think they understand what they're doing. Give me something simple. Just summarise the whole thing. You see the situation is there already. So create something based on that - it's okay. But here they just tell me....

I : **They didn't tell you what the benefits are. Theory wise, yes but they did not apply what they know to actual situation?**

G : Yes.Alright.

I : You can't get very much out of this report?

G : No. It's like I'm reading a book. They did not look at the situation. Did not do a situation analysis.

(on page 18: Recommendations)

G : Okay. Recommendation (reads the first two sentences) *'Technically based jobs such as technicians, machine operators and engineers the more skill they have the higher the wage should be'*. Isn't this the way life goes? (reads again) *'And the non-technical jobs would be experiencing slow growth in rates'*.Why? *'Company should give about 5% of the company's profit to employees in order to stimulate productivity and better achievement in future'*. Again why? Feasible? Where is the backup statistics? What proof? There are so many things I can ask. 5% is a lot, you know, from the company's profit.

I : Do you think they should know these things?

G : Yes, they should. Good thing it's 5%. If 10%, that's bad. And for a company with 100 employees, 5% is already a lot.

I : **These students are from FPP faculty. Fakulti Pengurusan perniagaan.**

G : More and more you should know. Like this one (picks on a sentence in the recommendation)-*'Each job title has been given points according to the requirement and weighted equally'*- Why/ On what basis? Basically what I'm saying is how did you come up with this recommendation.

I :   **Did the recommendations help you in any way?**

G :   Not really because they didn't really explain.Like this one you know (reads a sentence) – *'The amount of supervision both exercised and received should be considered. There are other aspects. What kind of impact would failure to do the job well have both in monetary terms and in stress and inconvenience to others?'* – I don't know. Tell me!

I :   **They did not explain.**

G :   Not only that. They are like asking me questions! I can't accept that. In the recommendation, what do you want me to do? Which one? What must be done?

End of interview.

<u>Report 4: Report on the Enhancement of Quality System and its importance to the industry.</u>

G :   This report- everythings copied.

I :   **This group of students had problems in gaining access to information. They didn't know what the topic is all about. But they went to do some research at Sirim. Sirim people themselves didn't quite know either- what was wanted. And the five structures (of quality system) which you wanted them to write on was felt too be too many... I don't know. maybe you can tell us what needed to be done. Content wise?**

G :   Okay.(reads the first paragraph of the Introduction) What are you doing? So I wrote here go straight to the point.

I :   **You said that they copied from a book...**

G :   They copied from somewhere. I've seen some. The thing is I don't know what they're getting at. Content wise...I would say it's good. If I mark on Content , it's good but whether or not what's in the content answered the question and whether they can apply it is besides the point. I've always complained that contents not correct. But this one I can't say much. The content is correct but they lost it. They did not answer the question so the content becomes nothing. But some parts I did not understand. Like this part (reads a sentence in the Introduction) – *' the absence of quality problem also removes the need for the hidden operations devoted to dealing with failure and waste and delivery performance benefits from increased... ... '*. I didn't understand this.

G :   Some parts are quite disorganized.

I :   So the contents correct but they're giving you things that you know, probably?

G : No, not necessarily I know. Certain parts the content is there but some parts are mixed up ike they did not understand what quality system is all about. (reads text) *'Many... that are using quality system saw quality system the... of all ills which saves money and improve everything.The realty is far from true'* - so...how do you know that? Why? This one....basically substantiate your claimslah. How do you know it's not true? Like this one – *Many companies boast having a certified quality system but did not realize that their company does not improve....Are the quality system to blame?'* Okay, tell me please. And then they go on and on ...nothing. Just briefly explain what is quality system...and then the five structures - just briefly explain. And then having said that, how do you apply that to the service industry. Of course then the recommendation, a bit .

I : **So, basically they did not actually address the topic?**

G : Yes. You know, if they go about and ask "Can I have the quality manual of a company?" –of courselah they'll say no. It's confidential. They (the students) themselves did not understand. I did not ask for examples. I asked how it can be applied. Even if I asked for it, I still want to know how a company's way of doing things can be applied to us. How did the company achieve it (certification) for example. Of course all these (referring to examples in students' report) they copied. Another thing, giving examples of a company is like a case study. I didn't ask for a case study. If it was a case study, I want to see just one (company) and that one, they really have to tell me everything. So, I don't know how to mark this. To say the content is not there, it's there but all the wrong things-missing the actual point.

I : **What about the organization?**

G : Organization's okay.

I : **Language?**

G : Well, I think clarity is lost because they didn't know what they're talking about.

I : **No....well. Let's look at the criteria..you said simple language....**

G : Not actually simple here. The language used here should be simpler, I think. Descriptions should be in point form. Here desciptions are so long and goes on and on. Make them shorter. Don't dwell on a point. Actually, they are not even dwelling on the point – they just copied! They give me the facts..everyting about ISO .....but so? So? What is to be done? Again, there's no cost analysis. If I want to adopt some kind of a quality system, I'd want a cost analysis.

I : **So you gave a point '1' for this report?**

G : Yeh. I don't knowlah. Can't seem to find much in here.

End of interview.

APPENDIX P

WRITE UP : GATEKEEPER 1

Content

The definition of 'content' to me is VERY large. However, to make it more simplified, the type of content will depend on two major factors:

- The type of proposal or report
- The targeted audience

The paper that is being prepared needs to be tailored towards the intended audience, for instance, in the preparation of a Business Plan for a new company. Where the intended audience would normally be a potential investor. From an investors point of view they are only interested in the following:

- What are we going to do i.e. what kind of business are we going to be involved in
- How much investment are we looking for
- How are we going to spend it
- What kind of returns can they expect to get in and in what time period
- Some form of financial summary with its full details as an appendix

Somehow or rather, the write needs to summarize all of this in the beginning of the paper i.e. in the Executive Summary section. Other types of information or content such as the Management, the full description of the products etc will come as a support.

This is just one example of proposal / report writing that is intended to a specific audience. A similar paper targeted to another type of audience will have to be approached differently even though the content would be similar. Emphasis on specific issues will have to be handled differently.

Organization

In organizing a paper, I find it very useful to actually prepare the ToC (Table of Content) first. It helps me prepare my train of though. It also helps the writer to be more focused but at the same time, if the mind starts to wonder, then the ToC will assist in putting everything in perspective. For example, lets look at the basic preparation of a New Product Business Plan. Once again, before writing anything, think about the targeted audience. Lets assume here that the target audience is the company's Senior Management. This is an example of how I would handle the ToC.

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
   2.1. The Industry
   2.2. The Economy
   2.3. The Product Overview
3. Detailed Product Description
   3.1. Description / Definition
   3.2. Usage
4. Cost of development or Set-up
5. Marketing Plan
   5.1. Pricing Mechanism
   5.2. Pricing Model
   5.3. Target Market
       5.3.1. Socio Economic
   5.4. SWOT Analysis
   5.5. Market Analysis / Market Acceptance
6. Projected Revenue
7. Financial Highlights - Projected Profit and Loss
8. Conclusion / Recommendations and Suggestions
9. Appendix (if required)

Note: The above example cannot be seen as an approved format by the industry.

This is just an example of how organization is crucial to the report writing. The train of though and the self-organization of the writer must be clearly laid our before any studies or survey is done.

317

Language & Style

The language and style of the paper can vary BUT most importantly, it MUST be simple to understand. If the readers do not understand what you are writing about then the reader will get turn off and not interested to read your paper! This must be avoided at all cost!!!

Hence the language must be simple, easy to understand, no jargons (if there is a need then provide a definition for it). In short, I have always found it useful to assume that the reader knows next to nothing of what I am writing about and I am educating them.

On the other hand, once again, depending on the reader, if the audience is the company's Board of Directors, then a short two or three pager paper will be sufficient. All description will be in point form. Keep to the points and address critical issues.

Format & Layout

This is one of the areas that a lot of people seem to miss out. The question of what type of format is applicable is not the question. It is more of how you present the paper is more important, i.e. for example, are the graphics that you are using suitable and further explains the paragraph? Are the statistical summary and the detailed summary indexed in the right matter so as to let the reader find it easily? In short, the positioning of the graphics, tables, charts etc. must collaborate with the information being included in the paper. The information must be accessible for the reader without them having to thumb around the paper. Another criteria to this is a good page numbering system and a good reference system.

Formatting styles vary from one individual to another. All that I am concern is more on the relevancy of the format. I.e. if the reader understands the paper, then the format is irrelevant.

Visual Support

Pictures and charts and alike are only as important if it provides as a supporting role to the paper. If it is not, then these are useless. However, visuals can play an important role in providing an overview to the reader. But beware, an illustration of an overview may seem sufficient to the writer but at times it can confuse the reader. I use a lot of visual for the purpose of making the reader understanding my paper more. It also acts as a means to keep the reader awake and interested in your paper.

Others

The *pre* writing activities is also an important activity or criteria. Brainstorming sessions, discussions etc. also contribute to good report writing. Get opinions from others. Research and alike will also substantiate your paper.

APPENDIX Q

WRITE UP : GATEKEEPER 2

4. Please write your views on what are important characteristics/features you consider in determining whether a written analytical report meet the standards regarded as 'acceptable' in your organisation (please refer appendix).

4.1 Content :
(in general and or specific to particular parts of the report e.g. findings, recommendations etc.)

Contents must be focused (ie answers the questions) and objective. Data must be correct and concise

4.2 Organization :

Organising a report must be in synch. with content must "give". Do not necessary follows conventional ways of arranging content

4.3 Language & Style : A little bit of style and imitative.

Simple language will all Go straight to the topic in hand

4.4 Format & Layout :
(please also include the parts necessary in an analytical report)

If content does meet the objective, no amount of 'fancy' formatting or layout can get the required approval.

4.6 Other features/ comments :

–

5. Would you say that the standards expected are applicable to fresh graduates?

[   ] Certainly   [   ] More or less   [✓] At times   [   ] No

6. From your experience in reading reports written by fresh graduates, how would you rate the reports? Please tick your answer.

[   ]   Effective
[   ]   Rather effective
[   ]   Acceptable
[✓]   Deficient
[   ]   Unacceptable

7. What problems, if any, do you frequently encounter with reports written by fresh graduates? Please tick your answers.

	Frequent	Less frequent	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
a. Content		✓			
b. Organization		✓/b	✗		
c. Language	✓			✓	
d. Style		✓/s			✗
e. Format		✓/f			✗

Others. Please specify Very restrictive in their thinking. Should have an open concept /open mind. Need not follow conventional way of writing as long as there is
THANK YOU.   some basic guidelines. Graduates must
up to date with current trend of
untidy and presenting reports.

320

APPENDIX R

Students opinion on the report writing skills taught in the course

A. Important areas/skills for report writing but were not taught

- supporting opinion with data
- selecting information
- organising information
- language and format
- language of RW
- where to find the resources
- clear explanation on how to go about writing
- recommendations

B. What other skills/item to include:

- how to relate to our economic situation
- writing skills; information search
- an example of previous report
- instructions on what kind of resources to find (information search)
- explanation on topics
- a homepage or website for Report Writing (RW)

APPENDIX S

Students' Feedback on the Report Writing Component

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. The objectives of the RW component were clear to me	1	13	3	2	0
2. The objectives of the RW component were practical	5	10	3	2	0
3. The objectives of the RW component were relevant to me	2	15	3	1	1
4. The RW subject was covered at appropriate depth	3	7	9	2	0
5. The RW content is relevant to my future career	10	7	3	1	0
6. RW in this course is interesting	3	9	4	2	0
7. The approach in writing reports used in this course was useful in allowing me the opportunity to write better	5	12	3	1	0
8. The length of time allocated to learning and writing reports was appropriate	1	8	5	6	1
9. RW in the course addressed my needs in writing in English for my specific discipline	1	18	2	0	0
10. I have gained a good understanding of RW	0	7	5	2	0
11. I was able to use the skills and strategies needed to write the various parts of a business report	1	12	7	1	0
12. Instructions and explanations on the skills and strategies needed in writing a business report were clear	2	11	3	5	0
13. I received enough feedback from the teacher on my progress in writing various parts of a business report	1	11	6	1	1
14. The feedback which I got from the teacher was useful in helping me acquire the necessary RW skills	2	10	8	1	0
15. The handout(s)/ reading materials on RW were useful in helping me understand the RW subject	3	11	5	2	0
16. The reading materials were adequate	0	9	9	1	0
17. The required reading materials (inside and outside the classroom) n producing the report were available	0	11	5	3	0
18. Classroom writing tasks and activities were sufficient to provide me with the necessary practice in writing a business report	0	15	5	0	0
19. I find RW in the course manageable	0	12	5	3	0
20. I like working in groups to write the report	6	10	5	0	0
21. The assessment procedure in the course was fair	2	11	7	0	0
22. All in all I have developed the ability to write a business report	2	13	6	0	0
23. The practice of writing reports was a useful learning experience	8	13	0	0	0
24. I am prepared to apply what I have learned/ to use the skills developed in writing reports in the workplace	7	10	4	0	0

SA-Strongly agree   A- Agree   U-Undecided   D-Disagree   SD-Strongly disagree