

Project Reports Genre Guide

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1. What are project reports?

A project report is a means to present your investigation by undertaking a comprehensive literature search, collecting relevant data and applying suitable methods to test theories or hypotheses. It also involves analyzing and evaluating possible factors which contribute to the observed data results and patterns, discussing and drawing a reasonable conclusion for the whole investigation in an organized and logical manner.

In the context of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPolyU), project reports as an assignment genre, can be categorized within the genre families of Literature Surveys, Methodology Recounts and Research Reports which all have the common goal of building research skills (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). It serves as a foundation in preparation for writing a much longer Research Report (i.e. Final Year Project Report or Undergraduate Dissertation).

The structure of this assignment genre may contain elements of each of these genre families, depending largely on the assessment focus and academic level of the subject. Some of them emphasize reviewing literature, as in a Literature Survey, while others focus on student's accounts of experimental procedures and findings as in a Methodology Recount.

In short, you are expected to demonstrate research, analysis, comparison and contrast, summarizing, as well as technical and disciplinary English writing skills.

2. How to prepare for project report writing?

You should pay attention to the following points before starting to write your report:

- (1) Make a writing plan to distribute your writing workload within a timeframe;
- (2) Continue your writing and investigation of the report topic simultaneously as you plan and develop its format and style (McMillan & Weyers, 2011, p. 227-8);
- (3) Filter and synthesise relevant information and knowledge, and prepare to explain thoroughly the techniques/methods adopted and results obtained in your project, with the help of visuals if applicable;
- (4) Assume the readers of your project report are laymen with no technical knowledge of your area. Your role is to guide them through the topic.

3. How to structure your project report?

Table 1 provides some examples of the full range of sections that are required in a project report. *Note that your own subject teacher may require you to include some or all the sections and moves, according to different assessment purposes, subjects and disciplines.*

Table 1: The structure of types of reports

| Literature survey /dissertation | General scientific report | Scientific report in chemistry | Non-scientific report |
|---|---|---|---|
| Title page Abstract Introduction Literature Review Main body of text Conclusions References | Title page Abstract Introduction Materials and methods Results Discussions Acknowledgements References | Title page Abstract Introduction Results Discussions Materials and methods Acknowledgements References | Title page Introduction Literature Review Main body of text Conclusions References |

Table 2 presents the typical sections of project reports and summarises the functions or ‘moves’ of each section.

Table 2: Typical components of project reports, with notes on expected moves and content in each section

| Sections | Expected moves and content |
|--|--|
| Title page | <p>Include the basic information of the project: the institution's name, the department's name, the programme of study, the subject code and name, the title of project report, the author(s)'s full name(s), the student number (if appropriate), the lecturer's/supervisor's name, and the submission date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific-style reports: a descriptive title that indicates the content of the project and sometimes describes the major findings. • Non-scientific-style reports: a title that defines the topic concisely but comprehensively. |
| Abstract (mainly for long reports) | Give a brief overview of all the key information in the report, namely, the objective, methods, analyses, key findings and results, and conclusions. |
| Keywords (optional & mainly for long reports) | Create a short list of words related to your project that is used in the discipline or field. |
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific-style reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce the topic by providing background information and objective for the project, without consulting literature; - State clearly the objective of the project; - Define major terms/concepts; - Provide a preview for the subsequent content of the report. • Non-scientific-style reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outline the project or issue to be addressed, which is the aim of the project; - Provide the context of the project, with references to the literature or other resource material to be used, if applicable. |
| Table of contents (mainly for long reports) | Provide an index for the convenience of readers to locate sections through corresponding page numbers in the report. |
| Main body of text or Literature review | <p>Address the issues or solutions in response to the project's objective; Provide an analysis of all related aspects/factors/matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific literature survey or scientific-style reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the historical development and current state of the topic or issue chronologically; - Indicate and describe related previous studies and scholars' chief contributions; |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicate correlations, contradictions and gaps in knowledge, and outline your approach to them. <p>✍ Divide this section into sub-sections with appropriate (sub-)headings to reflect various aspects of the topic.</p> <p>✍ Include tables to assist with a comparison between approaches or results from different studies.</p> |
| Materials and Methods | <p>Describe the design of the experiment/research performed;</p> <p>State the analytical methods adopted for data analysis, and explain why they are suitable;</p> <p>Describe the experimental or research procedures, which are replicable for other researchers.</p> |
| (Data analysis, Key findings and) Results | <p>Describe the experiments performed;</p> <p>Present the results in either tabular or graphic format, without discussing them;</p> <p>Indicate meaningful aspects of the data in appropriate order.</p> <p>✍ From the most significant and important item to the least.</p> <p>✍ Use visuals (i.e. box plots/graphs/charts/tables/diagrams) or sets of formulas to synthesize and present key findings and results, and add captions or explanations to describe them.</p> <p>✧ A closer connection between graphics and texts helps your elaboration as well as readers' understanding of your points.</p> <p>✍ You may combine this section with the Discussions section to allow your explanation to flow better or to develop a narrative to account for the relationship between results and approaches.</p> |
| Discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific-style reports: comment on the results and outline the main conclusion. Include the following components, if appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate the methods used, and the sources of errors in the experimental process; - Show the relationships among the observed facts that have been presented in the (Findings and) Results section; - Based on the observed findings and results, give possible explanations (i.e. why things happen), inferences (i.e. what these imply), and/or implications (i.e. what future effects there may be) towards the topic or issue; - Compare your findings with others or the ideal result. <p>✍ You may combine this section with the Results section to clarify your explanation or to develop a narrative to account for the relationship between results and approaches.</p> |

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| | <p>✍ Alternatively, you may combine this section with the Conclusions section.</p> <p>If so, include the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw conclusions and indicate the significance of your results. - Suggest improvements for the experiment(s) or research; - Suggest implementations of the findings (in a business report); - Suggest further project directions, if more time and resources are available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-scientific-style reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restate the problem or issue to be addressed; - Outline the main solutions or responses to the problem or issue; - Account for the favorable solutions with supporting evidence; - Provide recommendations, if appropriate. <p>✧ Original thoughts are counted heavily in this section.</p> |
| Conclusions | <p>Summarise the important findings in the report and highlight the most significant ones;</p> <p>Give an overview of the conclusions drawn previously in the report;</p> <p>Evaluate the major limitations of the study, and suggest improvements.</p> <p>✍ You may combine this section with either the Discussions section or the Recommendations section.</p> <p>✧ Sometimes, making a clear distinction between the three sections; Results, Discussion and Conclusion, can increase the overall clarity of the project report.</p> |
| Recommendations | <p>Propose a series of solutions or recommendations for action;</p> <p>State your expectations or the implications for potential future work/studies of the same topic.</p> |
| Acknowledgements (mainly for long reports) | <p>List the people you wish to thank for their help in your work.</p> |
| References /Bibliography /Literature cited | <p>List alphabetically all the references referred to or cited in the text, such as journal articles, books and websites, following closely the required conventions of structure, style and format.</p> |
| Appendices /Illustrations (mainly for long reports) | <p>Include complex materials, such as a questionnaire template, detailed figures or tables that are not necessary for your analyses and discussions in the main text, or would disrupt the flow of the report or significantly lengthen the Results section.</p> |
| Glossary (mainly for long reports) | <p>Provide definitions of technical or disciplinary terms that may be unfamiliar to readers</p> |

Keys: ✎ indicates a tip for structuring the sections of a project report; ✧ indicates a reminder of possible action to enhance the writing quality and readability of a project report

Adapted from: McMillan & Weyers (2011); Silyn-Roberts, (2013).

4. Writing the Body Sections

Below are samples for each of the body sections. *Note that you are advised to closely follow the assignment guidelines given by your department or lecturers, for instance, the use and style of (sub-)headings, word limit, section length (especially sections with visuals), appendices, font, line spacing, and margins.*

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Introduction:</p> <p>The waste problem is always a big challenge and concern for affluent countries. When people become richer, they tend to consume more to achieve greater convenience and better living standards, however at the same time the waste they generate keep increasing.</p> <p>There are three common types of solid waste in Hong Kong, they are: 1) municipal solid waste, which refers to the waste generated from domestic, commercial and industrial activities; (2) construction waste, which arises from construction, renovation and demolition activities and (3) special waste, which includes chemical waste, livestock waste and sewage sludge. [...]</p> <p>The objectives of this report are to examine the effectiveness of implementing a Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme under “polluter-pay” principle for solid waste management in Hong Kong, and to provide recommendations to make it more comprehensive.</p> <p>The first part of the report will study the public’s feedback about the “Polluter-pays” principle of the municipal solid waste charging scheme. Then the upside and downside of the scheme - the problems that may arise after implementing the policy- will be analyzed. The third part of the report will take examples from other countries who are successful in this matter and suggest alternatives to alleviate this issue. A discussion on whether the principle is the most suitable measure to reduce waste for Hong Kong will be included at the end.</p> | <p><i>Introduce the topic with background information.</i></p> <p><i>Define the major terms/concepts.</i></p> <p><i>State the objective(s) of the project.</i></p> <p><i>Provide a preview for the subsequent contents of the report.</i></p> |
|---|---|

Excerpts A&B are two examples of the moves in the **Literature Review** Section:

Excerpt A

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>2. Literature Review</p> <p>In this part, the discussion will be divided into two sections: (1) reduction of solid waste generation and (2) solid waste treatment. The first section discusses strategies for recycling solid waste and recovering resources to attain the goal of reducing solid waste generation. The second section compares different solid waste treatment to determine the best option according to Hong Kong's situation. Both sections are indispensable for establishing a comprehensive solid waste management scheme.</p> <p>2.1 Reduction of solid waste generation</p> <p>Hong Kong has much room for improvement to develop her recycling industry. <u>According to the Environmental Protection Department (2017), the overall recovery rate of municipal solid waste was 34% in 2016, which decreased 1% compared to 2015. The municipal solid waste disposed of to the landfills in 2016 was composed of food waste (35%), paper (22%), plastics (21%), glass (3%), metals (2%), other putrescible (7%) and others (11%) (ibid.). This shows that Hong Kong has not achieved her greatest potential for the reduction of solid waste generation by recycling, as common recyclables such as paper and plastics still cover a large portion of its total solid waste disposal. It is suggested that recycling is the most preferable solution to Hong Kong as solid waste disposal is composed of a great amount of paper and plastics (Yadav & Samadder, 2018).</u></p> | <p><i>Provide a context for the later discussion.</i></p> <p><i>Describe the historical development and current state of the topic.</i></p> <p><i>Citations (underlined)</i></p> <p><i>* These examples use the APA format.</i></p> <p><i>Please consult your lecturer for his/her preferred citation format</i></p> |
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Excerpt B

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| <p><u>Literature Review</u></p> <p>Zhu and Zhao's (2015) literature studied the origin and the development of "Polluter Pays" Principle (PPP). They state that this principle was introduced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the 1970s, with the first consideration of this</p> | <p><i>Indicate and describe related previous studies and scholars' chief contributions.</i></p> |
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| <p>charging scheme being allocation of costs for pollution prevention and control measures. They suggest that there are some shortcomings of the principle –mainly the principle is so broad that different interpretations appear-- like the words “polluter” and “acceptable state” are not well-defined. [...] Zhu and Zhao’s (2015) article also specifically discussed the PPP and waste management in Hong Kong and the critical factors of why PPP was not as successfully implemented as the other cities. They suggest that it is mainly due to Hong Kong adopting a conservative implementation approach—only enforced in selected areas with costs just partially internalized, and without establishment of legislation.</p> <p>Despite the above, Zhu and Zhao (2015) see progress and improvement so they still maintain a positive outlook for the use of PPP in Hong Kong [...]</p> <p>Nevertheless, contrary to Zhu and Zhao’s opinions, since Hong Kong is a small but densely populated city compared to other countries, the conditions are somehow different, and the measures used should not be exactly the same as those successful countries. As a starting point, a more conventional approach is more suitable for Hong Kong, it gives room for the government to make an adjustment by reviewing regularly and referring to other countries (Lee et al.2016). Through continuous improvement, the most feasible schemes for waste reduction in Hong Kong can be created.</p> <p>There is little discussion on the advantages of PPP, successful examples of PPP, and the difficulties a country may encounter during its implementation in the literature. Thus, other than the basic information of PPP, this report is going to investigate further in these three aspect[s] to see both the strengths and weaknesses of the principle and how to better apply the principle in Hong Kong.</p> | <p><i>Indicate and describe related previous studies and scholars’ chief attitudes/opinions/contributions.</i></p> <p><i>Evaluate / compare and contrast ideas in previous studies, and outline the author’s approach.</i></p> |
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Below is an example of the moves in the **Recommendations** part of the **Discussions** Section:

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| <p>Recommendations</p> <p>After reviewing the waste management policy and solid waste treatment adopted by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, it is found that all of them have been reducing their solid waste disposal mainly by reduction of solid waste generation through recycling. They all share the same vision of replacing landfills with incinerators as their final solid waste treatment. As Hong Kong faces a similar challenge with her neighboring countries – lack of sufficient flat land for waste management, the strategies adopted by them are most likely applicable to Hong Kong. [...]</p> <p>[...]</p> | <p><i>Evaluate the properties, development, needs and problems associated with the topic.</i></p> |
| <p><u>Reduction of solid waste generation</u></p> <p>Japan has adopted a different policy principle to reduce her solid waste disposal when compared with South Korea and Taiwan. The former has chosen to mobilize their citizens through legislation which addresses stakeholders from the upper social hierarchy – local governments and businessmen, while the latter has chosen to use a charging system to incentivize citizens' participation in recycling.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the success of the policies adopted by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan will never be achieved without public education, which teaches the citizens how to categorize the recyclables and how to treat them before disposal. <u>Therefore, Hong Kong should plan ahead by starting to educate our next generations the correct procedures for recycling.</u> [...]</p> | <p><i>Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of factors affecting the topic.</i></p> |
| <p>Apart from education, sufficient recycling facilities are essential to the success of the policies. At present, recycling bins are accessible to more than 80% of Hong Kong residents (Environment Bureau, 2013). <u>Hong Kong should keep on increasing the accessibility of recycling bins so that citizens can recycle conveniently at any location.</u> [...]</p> | <p><u><i>Propose possible solutions or recommendations for action.</i></u></p> |
| <p><u>Waste fee system</u></p> <p>Recently, Hong Kong has been proposing a charging scheme similar to the VWF and the PBTCF. It has led to disputes in society over this issue, from the price and volume</p> | <p><i>Evaluate the properties,</i></p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>of the authorized garbage bags, to the legal framework for enforcement. A survey discovered that a charging scheme may not be suitable to Hong Kong as it is least supported by the public (Wan et al., 2018). This suggests that Hong Kong will likely face great difficulty introducing a system similar to the VWF and the PBTCF.</p> <p>To settle the dispute, Hong Kong can conduct a pilot project just as what South Korea has done. In order to gain public support for policy measures, it is suggested that the government should work on changing the publics' 'attitude and perceived policy effectiveness' (Wan et al., 2015, p.45). With the promising results from the pilot project, citizens may have more confidence in the proposed system.</p> | <p><i>development, needs and problems associated with the topic.</i></p> <p><i>Propose possible solutions or recommendations for action.</i></p> |
|---|--|

Conclusion Section:

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| <p>Conclusion</p> <p>To establish a comprehensive solid waste treatment system, both strategies towards the reduction of solid waste generation and solid waste treatment are essential. By gaining experience from Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, it is recommended that Hong Kong take prompt actions to evaluate her recycling policies and plan for constructing infrastructure for solid waste treatment.</p> <p>In this paper, e-waste has not been mentioned. However, Hong Kong should also pay attention to its generation of e-waste, as it poses a serious threat to the environment if they are disposed of improperly. For further research purposes, it is suggested that analysis of the experiences from European countries, the pioneer of e-waste management, can be conducted to help Hong Kong form a more complete solid waste treatment system.</p> | <p><i>Summarize all important findings in the report.</i></p> <p><i>State personal thoughts and make recommendations for the selected topic.</i></p> |
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5. What are the appropriate language conventions for project reports?

Project reports usually adopt an academic writing style, even though their format, content and presentation may vary for different subjects and disciplines. Academic writing, as well as science and technical writing, require **conciseness** and **clarity**. It is important to keep your language **simple, accurate** and **objective** when you express ideas (McMillan & Weyers, 2011).

Please refer to table 4 in the Appendix for a list of the most common verbs for university assignments and exams.

5.1 Demonstrating objectivity by using impersonal language

The main ways to establish objectivity are as follows:

- Avoid first- and second-personal pronouns ‘I/me/one, you’, and ‘we/us’;
- Use structures like ‘It is...’, ‘There is/are...’ to introduce sentences, using the appropriate tense;
- Use structures like ‘This (NOUN) is...’ or ‘These (NOUN) are...’ for more specific points with a clear reference to the noun phrases appearing in the previous statements. The appropriate tense should be used. For example:

[1] *In Zhu and Zhao (2015)’s literature, they studied the origin and the development of “Polluter pays” principle (PPP). [...] This literature also specifically discussed the PPP and waste management in Hong Kong [...]*

- Use the passive instead of active voice, in order to focus on the action but not the actor who performed the action. It is better to maintain a good distribution and a reasonable number of passive constructions, so as to avoid distracting your readers (ELC, 2018).

5.2 Using appropriate verb tense and form

Table 3 summarizes the appropriate verb tense or forms for different moves in project reports.

Table 3: The use of verb tense and form for the moves or functions in project reports

| Functions/Moves | Suggested tense/form |
|--|--|
| Describing procedures and techniques of the research | Past tense |
| Describing results (of both the author's and other scholars' research) | |
| Describing established knowledge and existing situations | Present tense |
| Describing answers to the research question | |
| Describing illustrations | |
| Describing morphological geological and geographical features (for scientific-style reports) | |
| Describing theoretical background | |
| Giving recommendations | Conditional, subjunctive, imperative forms |
| Stating procedures or a set of instructions | Imperative form |
| Describing future events or in the Material and Methods section | Future tense |

Adapted from Silyn-Roberts (2013).

5.3 Hedging and assertive language

When you are not sure how correct your explanations, inferences or implications are, or there is more than one possible factor or variable, you should avoid being direct and definite. This is called hedging. The following are some ways of hedging:

- The use of modals like *may/might/would/could* + V

... choosing a site to build new landfills may take a long time to the Hong Kong government and to the worse situation, nobody would support building program if it is harmful to their benefit.

- The use of verbs like *seem, appear, suggest, indicate*
- The use of adjectives and adverbs like *possible/possibly, probable/probably*

5.4 Using appropriate vocabulary

Various categories of expressions are listed below for your reference:

Introduction

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|---|--|
| Stating the project objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>aim at/to, attempt, discuss, examine, figure out, focus on, provide, reduce, review</i> |
| Defining a technical or key term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>BE + known as/caused by, refer (to)</i> <i>This disease <u>is known as</u> ...</i> <i>Head and neck cancers <u>are caused by</u> ...</i> |
| Providing a context for later discussion: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>will/would + BE + V(pp),</i> <i>verbs (V): analyse, discuss, include, study</i> <i>After the discussion, there <u>will be</u> a comparison between these three policies and recommendation <u>would also be included</u>.</i> <i>In this paper, solid waste management in other countries <u>will be discussed</u> ...</i> |

Literature review

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|--|---|
| Indicating/describing/comparing and contrasting ideas in related previous studies and scholars' chief contributions: | <p>Verbs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>compare, confirm, discuss, prove, remind, state, study, suggest, think</i> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>compare(-d) to/with</i> • <i>On the contrary... / ... contrary to</i> |
|--|---|

Methods/Methodology

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|---|---|
| Describing and explaining the methods employed: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>adopt, analyse, apply, attempt, calculate, conduct, construct, define, derive, indicate, investigate, perform, select, show, use</i> |

Data analysis, Findings and Results

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|--|--|
| Describing and reporting textual and graphic information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>indicate, plot, represent, show</i> |
| Describing the analytical processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>carry out, calculate, capture, eliminate, investigate, retain</i> |
| Describing trends: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>drop, decrease, decline, increase, level off, reach, reduce, remain,</i> |
| Describing the degree of movement: | <i>slow(ly), gradual(ly), steady(-ily), dramatic(ally), sudden(ly), sharp(ly)</i> |
| Describing the cause and effect of the experiments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>account for, cause, result from</i> |
| Making comparisons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>compare(-d) to/with</i> • <i>On the contrary... / ... contrary to</i> • <i>X is more/higher/faster/smaller than Y</i> • <i>... between X and Y</i> <p>- comparatives</p> <p><i>The box plot shows that number of births on weekdays <u>were higher than</u> on weekends.</i></p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>- superlatives</p> <p><i>The <u>most significant</u> trend seen in the box plot is that most births took place during weekdays, with <u>the highest</u> mean on Tuesdays.</i></p> |
|--|--|

Discussions and Recommendations

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|--|--|
| Evaluating the properties/development/needs of the topic, or the advantages and disadvantages of factors affecting the topic | <p><i>The biggest benefit brought from incinerators is that it <u>can deal [with]</u> part of garbage immediately...</i></p> <p><i>...the success of the policies adopted by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan <u>will</u> never <u>be achieved</u> without public education ...</i></p> |
| Suggesting possible solutions and making recommendations for action: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can/could/would/may/should + V</i> (V: absorb, act, adopt, apply, conduct, consider, discuss, establish, introduce, learn, mimic, plan) <i>Hong Kong government <u>can consider</u> to combine these two ideas...</i> • <i>BE + V-ed (V: encourage, recommend, suggest)</i> <i>... it <u>is recommended</u> to provide a set of garbage bags for free ...</i> <i>Citizens <u>are encouraged</u> to...</i> <i>It is suggested+that-CLAUSE ...</i> |

Conclusions

| <u>Function</u> | <u>Useful Expressions</u> |
|--|---|
| Summarizing all important findings in the report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>BE + ADJ/N;</i> <p><i>The capital fee <u>is</u> just a deterrence ... reduc[ing] waste <u>is</u> the main objective ...</i></p> <p><i>... both strategies towards the reduction of solid waste generation ... <u>are essential</u>.</i></p> |
| Stating personal thoughts and making recommendations for further research on the topic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>BE + suggested, should + V (V: enforce, rethink, consider, take (initiative), pay (attention))</i> <p><i>Citizens/Hongkongers <u>should rethink</u> ... / <u>take</u> initiative to .../ are encouraged to</i></p> <p><i>... For further research purpose, it <u>is suggested</u> that ...</i></p> |

6. Useful resources

On this assignment genre:

<https://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/topics/reports.aspx>

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/node/9048/>

On hedging:

[English Language Centre \(polyu.edu.hk\)](#)

On thesis statements and topic sentences:

<http://icosa.hkbu.edu.hk/writing/specific-writing-genres-or-skills/scorm-thesis-statement-vs-topic-sentence/index.htm>

On referencing and citations:

<http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/Referencing/>

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

On first person pronouns and the passive voice in scientific writing:

<https://blog.oup.com/2018/01/first-person-pronouns-passive-voice-scientific-writing/>

On academic phrases for various purposes:

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

References

Books and journal articles

McMillan, K., & Weyers, J. (2011). *How to write dissertations & project reports*. Harlow: Pearson.

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2012). *Genre across the disciplines: Student writing in higher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silyn-Roberts, H. (2012). *Writing for science and engineering: Papers, presentations and reports*. London: Elsevier.

Project deliverables

English Language Centre. (2016). *Supporting and developing students' English literacy practices in the disciplines: Genre guide to project report in Applied Mathematics*. (Unpublished project deliverable). The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong.

English Language Centre. (2018). *Developing an open platform for writing support in the disciplines across the faculties: Genre analysis of project reports*. (Unpublished project deliverable). The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong.

7. Appendix

Table 4: The most common instruction words for university assignments and exams

| Instruction word | Definition – what you are expected to do |
|-------------------------|---|
| Account [give an] | Describe |
| Account for | Give reasons for |
| Analyse | Give an organised answer looking at all aspects |
| Apply | Put a theory into operation |
| Assess | Decide on value/importance |
| Brief account [give a] | Describe in a concise way |
| Comment on | Give your opinion |
| Compare [with] | Discuss similarities; draw conclusions on common areas |
| Compile | Make up (a list/plan/outline) |
| Consider | Describe/give your views on the subject |
| Contrast | Discuss differences/draw own view |
| Criticise | Point out weak/strong points, i.e. give a balanced answer |
| Define | Give the meaning of a term, concisely |
| Demonstrate | Show by example/evidence |
| Describe | Narrative on process/appearance/operation/sequence... |
| Devise | Make up |
| Discuss | Give own thoughts and support your opinion or conclusion |
| Evaluate | Decide on merit of situation/argument |
| Exemplify | Show by giving examples |
| Expand | Give more information |
| Explain | Give a reason for/say why |
| Explain how | Describe how something works |
| Identify | Pinpoint/list |
| Illustrate | Give examples |
| Indicate | Point out, but not in great detail |
| Justify | Support the argument for... |
| List | Make an organised list, e.g. events, components, aspects |
| Outline | Describe basic factors/limited information |
| Plan | Think about how to organise something |
| Report | Give an account of the process or event |
| Review | Write a report/give facts and views on facts |
| Show | Demonstrate with supporting evidence |
| Specify | Give details of something |
| State | Give a clear account of... |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Summarise | Briefly give an account |
| Trace | Provide a brief chronology of events/process |
| Work out | Find a solution, e.g. as in a maths problem |

(Adapted from McMillan & Weyers, 2007, p. 33)