A case study analysis is usually presented as a report and will therefore contain many of the features and structure of reports in general. This section will briefly describe each section, its purpose and structure.

Before reading this section you might like to try this Quiz to see how much you already know about writing reports.

**Title page**

The title page presents routine information and hints at the report's content through an informative title. Design your title page to be simple yet functional and appropriate for your audience. Common elements to include on the title page include:

- Your Institution’s name
- Title of the report
- Author/s (include student number if appropriate)
- Name of person or group to whom you submit the report
- Course name (or department/group or committee name)
- Date of submission

**Executive summary**

The executive summary is usually read by senior management. The manager will use the information in the executive summary to decide what action to take and who will carry it out. An executive summary should include an overview of the whole report and is longer than an abstract for a professional journal. It can be from one to a couple of pages, but try to keep it under 2 pages if possible. Headings can be used but there is no need to number these. In your own words present clearly and briefly:

- the topic area of the report
- the report’s primary aim/s
- state what was achieved (key finding)
- a summary of your approach
- significant findings
- a summary of the report’s recommendations

**Contents page**

Readers can use this to get a sense of how the report is structured and can skim the contents page for relevant sections to read. Include heading, subheading and page numbers. Usually in large reports a decimal numbering system for headings and subheadings are used. If it is a large report with many tables and figures in the body, a list of figures and a list of terminology or symbols can be included after the contents page.

**Introduction**

The introduction is very important as it sets the context for the report. Summarise the brief (your task), briefly outline the case and focus on its significance for the reader, state the report’s aim(s) and describe how the report is organised. Readers use the introduction to locate the aim of your report and to decide which sections of the report they need to
read. While you may include the key problem you have identified and its significance, it is not usual to detail findings or recommendations in the introduction.

**Case study report body**

The previous sections (title page, executive summary, contents, tables of figures, introduction) are preliminary sections.

It is difficult to give a single precise description of how a case study report should be organised as many models and variations exist. Organisation will depend on the type of report (eg; design, management), the type of case study investigation (eg; historical, problem orientated), and even the discipline or field you are writing in. Ultimately, the writer decides how best to organise and explain the case, the methodology and the recommendations. The following descriptions are examples only and are drawn from the field of risk management.

**Historical case study**

An historical case study's body sections may be organised as follows:

- **Context** — Describe the case or situation being investigated. Focus on the facts of the situation.

- **Approach** - Use topic based headings and a chronological sequence to give a summary and discussion of contributing factors (usually focusing on a specific time period in the past) that lead to and resulted from the situation described in the case study. Refer to theories, relevant publications or prior cases to explain and justify your interpretations of the situation. Problems and solutions and previous recommendations that were made are highlighted and briefly commented upon (eg; which problems were eventually solved and how they were solved, or which problems continued and why they remained unsolved).

- **Conclusion**- Try to answer the following questions. What else has been achieved since the situation occurred? Have all recommendations been implemented? What may happen in the future?

**Problem-orientated case study**

A problem orientated case study's body sections may be organised as follows:

Heads should be informative and descriptive providing a clue to the contents of the section.

- Describe the context of the case. Present the central issue you will be analysing, what decisions have already been made, what communication processes are occurring in the situation. Focus on the facts.

- Explain your methodology. Identify problems that are demonstrated in the case (use visuals if appropriate) and explain and justify your choice of analysis tools (eg SWOT, PEST, Force Field…).

- Present summaries of your findings (put details in the appendices) and indicate how you decide what is acceptable/not acceptable as a solution.

- Present an action plan for the recommendations. Recommendations in a case study report should be fairly detailed. Include an action plan that details who should take action, when and how (eg; specifications, steps to follow), and how to assess the action taken. For example, in a case study report you may decide the likelihood of 3 scenarios pose the greatest risks for your company but each poses a risk in unique ways. For each scenario clearly state who is responsible, what action they should take and how they can assess the recommendation.

**Conclusions**

Every report should include a concluding statement/s on the subject of the report. Restate the aim of the report and state how you have achieved it. Present the main findings and key recommendations in a summarised form for the reader's benefit. You should also restate the limitations of the report.

**Appendices**

Appendices provide additional or supporting information that while not essential to understanding the main facts and recommendations, may be of interest to the expert reader and are evidence of your research and analysis. Appendices
can be tables of raw data, detailed calculations, design drawings, maps, copies of a questionnaire or survey etc. Appendices are normally listed as Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and so forth. Give each appendix a clear informative title. Appendices and reference lists are supplementary sections of a report.

Reference list

This is a list of all the sources of information you have referred to in the report. Many schools in engineering recommend the author date system. See Referencing for more information on reference styles. We recommend you check with your course facilitators on their preferences.

See next: Activities for recognising report sections