

CIS400/401 Final Report Specification*

Dept. of CIS - Senior Design 2009-2010

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ABSTRACT

Your final report is the culmination of your work over the prior year. It should be an extension of your progress report, with your system description refined where necessary, and a far improved ‘results’ section. Your final report should be more formal than previous reports.

This document sets the required parameters for the final report and makes note of common errors seen in previous reports. Content of the previous specifications remains relevant and should be referenced when authoring.

1. REPORT PARAMETERS

Final reports should be 10+ pages in length. Admittedly, this page requirement is not a large one. However, what content you provide will be graded stringently. We prefer your efforts to be concentrated on writing a succinct, well-written report rather than a poorly written longer one. There is no fixed number of resources – use good judgement. **Do not plagiarize** – we want to see everyone graduate.

2. REPORT FORMAT

See previous specifications for a guideline on how your final report should proceed. The “Introduction → Related Work → System Model → System Implementation → Results → Future Work → Conclusions” format is a typical one for systems papers. However, do not be afraid to break from this as your project may require.

3. FORMALITY ISSUES

One of the biggest issues we have had in previous papers is that students tend to tell their personal story, rather than a more research-focused one. Notice that the final report does not ask for you to assess how much of your anticipated goal was completed or reflect on your difficulties. Tasks that remain uncompleted may fall under “Future Work”, but keep this section focused on large research questions, not trivial features of your system.

Assume a researcher has found your paper on the Internet. What would he/she care about? They would not care about the fact you had to manage a part-time job, or your prior reports, nor the fact you had never used SQL and had to learn it. Instead, they would care about: (1) what you have done, (2) how you did it, and (3) how effective it was. Keep your discussion focused on these topics.

*For this report, we do **not** need a signed hard-copy. Electronic submission is sufficient: Submit **only** via BlackBoard, please do **not** email copies to the professor or TAs.

4. THINGS TO REMEMBER

What follows is a list of common errors that you should avoid/consider when authoring (in addition to the individual feedback provided on your progress reports). Admittedly, some of these are minor but will greatly improve the professionalism of your reports:

- Latin phrases should generally be italicized. This includes things such as: *etc.*, *et al.*, *e.g.*, and *i.e.*
- The first time an acronym is used it must be spelled out in full, no matter how painfully obvious.
- L^AT_EX includes a mono-type font via `\texttt{}` which is useful to distinguish code keywords from text.
- Make sure your images look good in grey-scale. This is the way your paper will likely be printed.
- Though your English classes may have taught you otherwise, sources need not be introduced at such length. Rather than, “As Andrew Johnson and David Huggins, professors at the University of California discuss in their 1998 IEEE article entitled . . .” – the more concise “As Johnson *et al.* discuss . . .” is preferred.
- The quoting of other authors is extremely unusual in technical writing. Paraphrase.
- Figures and graphs need to be referenced in-text (via the `\ref{}` command). Do not assume that just because figures are on the page that readers will look at them. Discuss the figures in-line and provide some discussion of what they are showing.
- Indeed, BibTeX is a user-friendly citation engine. However, some groups need to seriously review its output and adjust accordingly. At times, BibTeX follows some odd capitalization and abbreviation rules that are not always what a user would expect.
- On the topic of citations; cite persons/papers immediately in-text. Rather than, “As the WikiBook for LaTeX describes, . . . [1]”, use “As the WikiBook for LaTeX [1] describes, . . .”.
- Mathematical formalism is good, but often can be typeset better. Put all variables between math tags (*i.e.*, `\$x\$`), or in the `\equation{}` environment.

5. REFERENCES

- [1] Wikibooks. LaTeX. <http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/LaTeX>. Note: Students should not cite Wikis!