

CIS400/401 Final Report Specification*

Dept. of CIS - Senior Design 2011-2012

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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. 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 → Background → 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. INCREASED FORMALITY

Students should not 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. Keep it as impersonal as possible. 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) motivations of why you did it, (3) why it's better than what already exists, (4) how you did it, and (5) how effective it was. Keep your discussion focused along these themes.

*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.

Along these lines, avoid references to “this project.” Do not reference your previous writings (*i.e.*, “as we mentioned in our proposal”). The researcher who finds your paper on the Internet is not aware of, and does not care about, these things. Write for an anonymous audience, and in a style like you would submit this paper to a conference/journal. Final reports will be publicly posted.

4. ETHICS

As we mentioned during the Joshua Beeman lecture, your final report must contain a short (1-3 paragraph) section concerning ethics. Immediately preceding the “conclusion” section is probably a good place, unless your project dictates a more obvious location (*i.e.*, if your data collection had ethical issues, it's probably best to discuss these two topics adjacent to each other).

In most cases, this discussion will not be about actual ethical issues encountered, but instead on *imagining* ethical issues that could arise as a result of your product/system. Imagine you are wildly successful and tons of people are using your service. What could go wrong? How could customers or others get hurt (physically, economically, mentally)? As always, try to concentrate on novel issues that your system introduces; the fact your back-end database could be hacked is not a novel issue. If you believe that your project is “risk-less” then you should justify that claim (and maybe email us to discuss why you believe this, because it is an unlikely case).

5. FINAL NOTES

Please be attentive to the following:

- We have saved copies of how we graded your progress reports (*i.e.*, the low-level suggestions). We glance over these before reading the final project report. It is not a good indicator when even the simplest and most obviously wrong issues have not been addressed.
- The “Writing Guidelines” posted on the website remain very relevant. It addresses many of the common errors that students make in technical writing.