Writing a submission

What is a submission?

A submission is a response to a proposal put forward, for example, by a government body or organisation. A submission enables interested stakeholders (e.g. members of the public, community groups, organisations) to provide feedback (e.g. request a change in a policy, endorse an action) to the body putting forward the proposal about the proposal before decisions are made or legislation is passed. The feedback given in the proposal may be given to **support** all or part/s of the proposal or alternatively to **disagree** with all or part/s of the proposal. Suggestions or recommendations can also be made.

In the future you might find yourself in a job where you are required to make submissions. You will be expected to bring the knowledge you have gained through your degree to formulate a point of view and/ or to reflect your own or your organisation's philosophy. Likewise you will need to present that point of view in such a way that the ideas you submit are considered credible. So when you are given this type of assignment, remember that it is an opportunity for you to develop the skills of submission writing.

Academic Skills Quick Guide

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Getting started

When asked to prepare a submission:

- analyse the proposal. Ask 'what is the proposal about?'
- determine what knowledge you have in relation to the proposal and what areas you need to investigate further
- do the research
- critically evaluate the proposal; that is, decide whether you agree or disagree with all or only some aspects of the proposal
- gather the information such as facts, examples and statistics to help you substantiate that point of view. These will provide you with the means to judge the ideas put forward in the proposal.

Having a point of view will enable you to put forward a convincing argument to justify your position and provide recommendations (as relevant).

A format for submissions

There is no set format for making a submission. Generally headings are used to structure the submission. Below are suggestions for formatting a written submission in Environment, Science and Engineering:

- A letter of introduction. This should contain your contact details and include an introduction to yourself and/or your organisation and your relationship to the policy, issues or problems.
- It is often important to describe your expertise, for example, your professional qualifications, research interests or community affiliations, as this can give greater weight to your submission.
- Title page with a succinct title to communicate your purpose.
- An executive summary or abstract (a brief overview of the entire submission).
- An introduction that clearly states your overall purpose.
- Your response to specific questions and/or issues outlined in the document. Use relevant topic headings to structure this section.
- Your conclusion/s.
- Relevant recommendations.
- Reference list.
- Any appendices.

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+61 2 6626 9262 | ctl@scu.edu.au | www.scu.edu.au/teachinglearning

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Some points about preparing a submission as an assignment:

- Always **find out the requirements** as specified in the assignment task and in the marking criteria. Check out whether you have to address all the areas and if not, focus on the areas that are of particular concern or interest to you.
- **Research** and **read widely** to gather information to enable you to critically evaluate the ideas being put forward in the document. Remember that as a researcher your focus may be different to that of other individuals, or groups who may also be making submissions on the same topic. So when researching, look for ways to critically evaluate the ideas presented in the proposal.
- **Use headings**. Check out whether the agency/department inviting the submission has produced guidelines outlining what should be addressed and how it should be presented. Otherwise, if there are no guidelines within your assignment task, select your own headings. Ensure your headings are indicative of the content in that section and are arranged in a logical sequence.
- **Write to be convincing**. This means (a) taking a position or forming a viewpoint and (b) writing paragraphs to justify that position or viewpoint. For example, if you want a plan, or part of a plan, to go ahead as suggested then you must argue that it is a positive course of action and vice versa.

Make sure that your paragraphs:

- begin with a sentence that clearly states the purpose of the paragraph, for example, a statement that clearly indicates whether you are agreeing or disagreeing with this particular aspect of the proposal.
- include valid scientific explanations, including statistics and examples (if appropriate)
- have all ideas that are not your own accurately referenced
- conclude with a sentence that states the relevance of the ideas just presented.

Remember, too, that your ideas should be seen as being achievable.

Related Quick Guides

Writing analytically and persuasively, How to demonstrate critical judgment, Writing paragraphs