



# TECHNICAL REPORT WRITING FOR ENGINEERS

## REASONS FOR PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

**Dr Andrew Garrard, Senior University Teacher, Multidisciplinary Engineering Education, The University of Sheffield:** When you write a technical engineering report, you are attempting to document a large quantity of information and articulate the synthesis of complex concepts. As we have discussed at the start of this course, the method for making this task manageable for the writer and the reader is to divide up the content into specific discrete sections. Because the content of each section is defined, you can write them in isolation from each other and in any order, which makes it easy to build the document. For example, it's quite common for writers of technical engineering reports to process the data and write the results section first, as this gives some insight into why the work was done and what the outcomes were, which helps write the rest of the text.

While this approach is great for getting sections written, problems arise when the sections are put together into a single document. These problems can be associated with differences in style and formatting, such as changing fonts or text sizes in different sections, or structural issues, such as references or figure numbers not being ordered correctly. Engineers working in industry will inevitably collaborate in teams to deliver projects. If working on a document collectively with other people, these inconsistencies can be exacerbated.

So when the sections are combined to form the report, a process of bringing it all together must be applied. The overall structure of the report must be articulated and the document bookended with front matter, such as a title and contents page at the start, and finished with supplementary material, such as an index at the end. Finally, the formatting across the whole document must be checked for consistency to give a professional and coherent appearance to the reader.