

Dublin Institute of Technology

MSc Computing Science (Information Technology for Strategic Management)

Discipline Specific Module

STUDENT GUIDANCE NOTE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE RESEARCH PAPER

The focus of the Discipline Specific Module (DSM) research paper moves from researching and reporting as required by the Research Methods Module to consolidate that approach with a limited requirement of identifying an original research perspective and an original contribution to the body of knowledge. To do this, the paper should include comment, critique and evidence of original thinking. At this stage the student is aware of the need to prepare the paper to a recommended style, format and use other good research and reporting practice and these must be evident in the finished paper. The DSM research paper is a significant step towards the final paper, which should be of publishable standard.

The Research Paper for the Discipline Specific Module will be assessed under five headings and various sub-headings. The headings are Presentation style, Language, Investigation of source material, Research analysis and Formulation of conclusions. The remainder of this guidance note provides insight into the issues that will be assessed under each heading.

1 PRESENTATION STYLE	
Abstract	This is an overview of the paper, which is intended to convince others that the content is significant and that their understanding of the subject matter is incomplete if they have not read your paper through. Weave the keywords of your text into a summary of about 200 words.
Introduction	Provide a two or three paragraph overview of your paper, which sets the scene and context for your reader. Make certain that you state the aim of the paper, who your audience is, why you are writing this paper (the problem or challenge to be addressed) and how you went about the research (the research methods). Provide signposting for the reader by indicating section content.
Content	The paper should concentrate on a specific topic and should not attempt to be a definitive work on the entire subject area. Throughout your paper you should retain the ITSM focus. You should present the content so that it follows a logical structure and you should include examples specific to the topic. Continuity in your paper is vital for easy reading and understanding, so, include signposting at the beginning and end of sections, that is, introduce what is about to be read and occasionally remind the reader what has been read. Be aware of opportunities to help you reader and use them. For example, if you intend to write <i>“In section 3.4, four issues were explained...”</i> then help your reader by repeating the four issues.
Conclusion	Summarise the paper for your reader and especially argue why your perspective is of value to others (strategic managers and IS professionals). Indicate potential for further research.
References	Cite an appropriate balance of original sources from academic journals, conference proceedings, standards documents, white papers and similar authoritative sources. While undergraduate textbooks are appropriate, for research, you should be citing original publications of recognised world experts.
Format	Camera-ready paper format, fonts styles, heading numbers, line spacing, page margins, citations, references, tables and figures should be in keeping with the appropriate recommendations. Where recommendations are not available, adopt your own standard and use it consistently throughout your paper. Learn from the professional format of the research papers that you are reading.

2 LANGUAGE	
	Write in the active voice using best English grammar, syntax and semantics in properly structured paragraphs. Avoid slang and colloquialisms. Remember to write gender-free text and remember too that “ <i>one does not use one in one’s papers, dissertations, etc., etc., etc</i> ”. You should proofread your paper for typing and similar errors and you should re-read your paper for structure, meaning and clarity.
3 INVESTIGATION OF SOURCE MATERIAL	
Coverage	Let the reader know that you have researched the entire subject area but that you concentrated only on those sections specific to your research.
Depth	Write your content to a depth that is appropriate for your reader. For example, if your readers are technical professionals then technical detail should not present any difficulty. However, strategic managers might not need the same level of technical detail. Remember too that it is necessary to balance the content. For example, if you are writing about five equally significant topics and you write two pages each on four of them and five lines on the fifth, then is the fifth really a significant topic or is there something lacking about your research?
Selection of material	Make certain that you have researched a broad section of internationally recognised experts of the subject area. Also, be conscious of how dated a selected publication might be and its relevance to your research. For example, it is not unusual for a beginning researcher to write, “ <i>The Internet has the potential to become a significant medium for commerce (Bloggs, 1982)</i> ”. This kind of reporting is meaningless in the year 2000 when the Internet is well established as the foundation of e-commerce.
4 RESEARCH ANALYSIS	
Original perspective	The focus of this paper is to report your research with a conclusion (summary and observations especially for future research) and to include your own original perspective and contribution to knowledge. Your own original perspective should address some new element of the significance or impact of your view of the topic in ITSM. Typically, this might argue for or against dated philosophy, redundant understanding and practice, or introduce new understanding and practice.

Original contribution	Your paper should give informed comment and critique as necessary (no longer simply writing a report) and you should include a convincing logical argument in support of your original perspective and contribution to knowledge. Your comment and critique must be based on research and must not be simply stating an opinion. Remember to clearly distinguish what is research from what is your own original contribution.
5 FORMULATION OF CONCLUSIONS	
Review of key issues	Remind your reader of the topics that have been researched and if appropriate include a short concluding discussion.
Summary	Include the derived conclusions that you make as a result of this research. Remind your reader again of your original perspective and contribution. Also, indicate the value of your research to others and how they might apply it.
Focus	Confine your summary and conclusions to the content already presented in the body of your paper. Do NOT introduce new material at this stage. Focus your summary and conclusions towards your original audience.
Clarity	The clarity of your summary and conclusions should convince your reader of your ability as a researcher and your standing as a master.