

Report Writing – Best Practice Guidelines

There are a number of factors which contribute to good report writing and these include the following:

- Be factual, consistent and accurate
- Jargon, meaningless phrases, irrelevant speculation and offensive subjective statements should be avoided.
- Compose text using formal language that is clear, accurate and factual, avoiding irrelevant or unnecessary comment.
- Try to be as objective as possible when expressing opinions.
- Record the opinion in the context of the facts that support it.
- Avoid personal comments or inappropriate 'colourful' remarks (potential embarrassment individuals or organisations does not constitute grounds for withholding access to the record).
- Do not record unsubstantiated subjective comments, particularly those made by one person about another. Remember that the recorded comment is considered the personal information of the individual about whom it was made and that person has a right of access to it. Comments by one person about another using intemperate language can usually be re-phrased before recording without losing meaning.
- Make sure that the medium on which text is recorded is appropriate to the subject matter. Correspondence on important subjects via e-mail should be composed as formal business letters and sent as attachments. Important information should never be recorded on post-its and fixed to a file cover or to a document on file. If information is important enough to place on file it should be entered in an appropriate way.
- Destroy all notes and drafts of administrative records that have not been circulated or submitted for comment by others as part of the decision-making process when formally written up. Make sure all manual notes and annotations are legibly written.
- All recorded information forms part of the official record holdings of the university. Naming or stamping a record "unofficial" or "confidential" will not render it inaccessible.

(From the UCD Records Management and Freedom of Information Unit www.ucd.ie)