

Assessment of written presentation reports – HISS

Following discussion of the assessment process by course leaders on 5th December 2006, it was clarified that undergraduate reports will constitute one of several pieces of work to be assessed, and that these will be judged on the performance of the group. In consequence we propose a set of criteria which can help examiners, supervisors, and students make concrete the strengths and weaknesses of a report. Examiners and supervisors can thus use the criteria to relate their assessment to the different communicative aspects of the report. In doing so, a preliminary assessment can be either confirmed or questioned.

We propose four assessment levels for written reports. From discussions with supervisors we have isolated two key aspects that are expected in a text, namely understanding of **content** as well as a clear **structure**. In addition to these two aspects, the criteria pay attention to **language**, and the fact that a text gives an immediate **overall impression**, which influences the reader. With these key aspects as a starting point, we have chosen to call the criteria ‘HISS’¹.

The four aspects are closely related to each other and from discussions with supervisors we have learnt that **content** is usually viewed to be more important than the other aspects. Thus we propose that the criteria’s weighting correspond to the views held by many supervisors:

Criteria	Weighting
Overall impression	20%
Content & understanding	40%
Structure	20%
Language	20%
Combined grade	100%

All aspects of the report should demonstrate sufficient capability, in the same way that separate parts of the report must achieve minimum marks.

As understanding of content requires subject-specific theoretical knowledge, we have tried to express criteria about subject knowledge in terms which can apply across different disciplines. Thus some phrases may not be optimal for specific subject areas. In our suggestions for criteria and the basis for these, we have on a number of occasions also made a distinction between levels, by using the terms ‘discussion’ or ‘commentary’, where ‘discussion’ relates to a more considered and better report. Thus ‘commentary’ reflects a more superficial and more fragmented discussion.

¹ The acronym is based on the Swedish terms for the four main aspects.