UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH WRITNG & READING CENTER

**WRITING FORMAL ANALYTICAL REPORTS**

An FAR is a technical or professional document written for government or business uses. These reports use information from surveys, financial records, and other reliable sources to reach conclusions that help officials and executive officers make important decisions.

**Goals of FARs:**

An Analytical Report accomplishes one of three main goals:

**Assesses Opportunities**

This kind of FAR **informs decision makers about a new, exciting, and probably successful endeavor**. For example, you may suggest that a company that makes processed foods for human consumption could be successful and make a profit from making pet food as well. For this report, you have to research the new market and find examples of other companies in similar markets that might influence your path into a new industry.

**Solves Problems**

Reports that solve problems **do exactly what they claim: they solve problems**. Using previous examples of similar situations and weighing the options between several solutions, you should make clear recommendations to a decision-maker based on the research compiled. For example, a business might be faced with closing down a number of restaurants in a chain, but the person in charge of closing the chains doesn't want to see so many people go without jobs. What could the company do?

**Supports Decisions**

If your organization or business is making a big move in the near future, this report will **analyze the effects (both positive and negative) a big decision will have on the organization**. If done retrospectively -- as in, the move has already been made and there have been repercussions, good or bad -- then you may use the available data to evaluate the move.

**Parts of an FAR:**

**Title Page**

**Letter of Transmittal -** this one-page memo or business letter is a persuasive document that convinces the reader that the document presented is informative, exciting, important and valuable. The letter includes the main arguments and the conclusions of the paper, and often includes unique or unusual findings that support the argument.

**Table of Contents**

List of Illustrations - Technical and Professional writers often use images such as graphs and diagrams to convey complex ideas to their readers. It may be required for images to be included in the paper and listed at the beginning of the document.

Executive Summary - In a realistic business environment, the CEO of a company will certainly not have time to read an entire report. This section is typically one to two pages long and summarizes every point made in the paper, including the conclusion and recommendations. Short, clear paragraphs with headings are used to summarize the entire paper.

**Introduction**

The introduction of an FAR includes a thesis statement wherein you describe the purpose of your paper. It also includes a “Resources” section describing where information was found; a “Scope” section that describes how much of the chosen topic will be covered and where the analysis will focus; and a “Limitations” section that state the areas related to the topic that will NOT be included in the paper.

**Body**

The main content of the report is presented in short, topical paragraphs. Relevant and informative headings are used to help the reader navigate from one topic to another -- this is often useful to busy business people who may need to refer to one particular section of your report during a meeting or presentation. All data reported is analyzed within the body of the paper. Images are included where visual clues are more effective than simple text.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Data and analysis result in an answer, solution or concluding argument which is presented in this section. The conclusion is followed by a recommended plan of action for the company. Recommendations answer the question "so what am I supposed to do about it?" assuming that the paper is successful and the reader is convinced of the argument made and the conclusions drawn.

**Works Cited**

FARs use MLA format unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

**Appendices**

Any large images, surveys or additional information should be included in the FAR as an appendix

**Tips for Writing an FAR:**

\*The key term is ANALYZE - make sure you know what it means and apply it to your report.

\*For Business Communications Class, it is wisest to choose a **public company** because:

* Public companies are required by law to publish financial data; therefore, you will be able to find information for your report.
* Public companies tend to be the big ones that the media pays more attention to, so you might be able to find articles on these large businesses.

\*Use simple, clear language

* **No slang terms**
* Avoid very long sentences and uncommon words

\*Research your audience

* Your professor is NOT your primary audience. Steve Jobs might be, though.
* Use the website of the organization or business to gain a sense of the kind of language the company likes to publish.

\*Every point you make in your report must be supported by factual data from your research

\*Databases, search engines, and social networking platforms ***are not sources***; if you go to the Google

 homepage, you will not find the Nike logo, but if you go to the Nike homepage, you might find their

 logo.

\*Use the format you are told to use by your professor - this is the best training for the real world.