Individual Progress Report Guidelines

Introduction

At the point the Individual Progress Reports are submitted, the project groups are expected to be well into the implementation of their design. It is expected that the work will have hit some delays and problems not anticipated by the students. It is also expected that some alternatives, both anticipated and not, will have presented themselves and will have required decisions. This work, the development and implementation of the design and particularly the decisions and redirections, should be reflected in the Individual Progress Report.

Your writing should be concise, and you should use bulleted lists, tables, and figures where possible to keep the document short, yet informative. Pages exceeding the maximum length will be ignored.

Document Format

The document should be double spaced, numbered, have a minimum 0.75” margin all around, and the font size should be a minimum 12 point. The evaluation form, cover page, Executive Summary, and Table of Contents pages are not numbered.

An electronic copy must be submitted in Adobe® Portable Document Format (PDF) on 8½” x 11” paper size. The deadline for submitting a hardcopy and electronic copy of the Individual Progress reports can be found here. The instructions for submitting an electronic document can be found here.

The report contains the following sections in the order given below.

- Evaluation form and cover page (2 pages)
- Executive Summary (1 page)
- Table of Contents
- Group Progress Summary (target 1 page, max. 3 pages)
- Individual Progress and Contributions (target 5 pages, max. 8 pages)
- References
- Appendix A: Gantt charts
- Appendix B: Project Goals and Requirements
- Additional Appendices (max. 15 pages)

Sample Progress Reports

Click here for some sample progress report outlines. These examples are drawn from past student reports, and illustrate how the general guidelines can be applied to a variety of design projects. The technical details have been removed in order to highlight the report structure and organization as opposed to the technical content or writing style.

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Section Details

A. Evaluation Form and Cover Pages (2 pages)

The evaluation form and cover page can be found below. They should be placed at the front of the progress report with the evaluation form on top.

- [Word](left click to open the word file. Or right click your mouse and click on “Open weblink in browser”)
- [pdf]

Similar to the Project Proposal, near the top of the evaluation form are two fields relating to contact hours. Fill in the approximate average number of contact hours per month that you have met with your supervisor (as a group), excluding the exam and holiday period. Under “optimal # contact hours per month”, enter what you feel would be ideal amount of time. This will help your supervisor understand what you feel the supervision needs of your project are. Typically, you should be meeting regularly with your supervisor, between 1 to 3 hours per month, although the meetings may be less frequent as the project enters the later stages.

In some cases, the supervisor has delegated the supervision to a graduate student or a postdoctoral fellow (support staff). In this event, the support staff member should provide the number of contact hours he/she has had with your group since the last reporting period. This should be conveyed by the support staff member to your supervisor so that your supervisor can fill in the correct information on the evaluation form. This can be accomplished in the following way: you should attach a single page at the end of the completed document (hardcopy only), and have the support staff member responsible for guiding you (other than the supervisor) provide the following information on this page:

- his or her full name,
- the nature of the guidance provided by the support staff,
- the average number of contact hours per month the support staff had with your group and how often the support staff relayed the student’s progress to the supervisor, and
- the signature of the support staff member along with the date that the page was signed.

B. Executive Summary (1 page)

Make this a 1-page summary of the document. Include highlights from each section (e.g. Group progress, individual progress, summary of recent milestones, key accomplishments, actions and decisions, etc.). The Executive Summary should be written as a stand-alone document (NO: "A list of milestones is included,” YES: "The key milestones were ....").

C. Table of Contents (1 page)

This should follow the Executive Summary. The Executive Summary is usually not included in the Table of Contents. Page numbering should start with the Group Progress Summary.
D. Group Progress Summary (target 1 page, max. 3 pages)

This section summarizes the entire project and what has been done since the last report. It can be written by the group and can be used as the common portion of each team member's individual report.

This section contains the following items:

- A summary of the project goal and any changes to the goal or requirements since the design review. A system-level diagram is often helpful. Be brief here since you will also provide an updated copy of the complete project goal and requirements in Appendix B.
- A summary of the group's progress. Highlight a few key accomplishments since the design review. Briefly describe some of the key challenges that were encountered and some of the key decisions that were made in this time. Is the group on schedule? Make explicit reference to the milestones on the original Gantt chart from the Project Proposal.
- The key responsibilities of each team member since the design review. One or two items for each member is sufficient.
- A summary of any changes to the group work plan, individual responsibilities, or the project milestones. Again, be brief here since you will provide the details in Appendix A.

E. Individual Progress and Contributions (target 5 pages, max. 8 pages)

This is the main part of the individual progress report where you highlight your personal contributions to the overall project. Keep your writing concise, and focus on what was actually accomplished. If your progress is below your expectations, avoid the temptation to pad this section or to digress back into professing the intrinsic virtues of your project. Instead, write about what needs to be done to get your project back on track.

Typically, the emphasis is on the work you've done since the design review. However, since this is the only individual report in the course, you may also highlight your contributions made prior to this. If you are limited by the report length, summarize your earlier contributions in this section and place all the detailed documentation of your earlier work in the appendix.

Include the following in this section:

- An overview statement that helps the reader appreciate the significance of your tasks to the overall project.
- A summary table of your individual tasks or milestones for this reporting period. Report only on your tasks; if you have significant contributions in a task assigned to another team member, subdivide the original task into distinct portions which each of you can separately claim responsibility for (e.g. split 'Design of X' into 'Design of X' and 'Testing of X'). The table should have the following headings:
The ‘Task #’ and ‘Task title’ should be taken directly from the updated Gantt chart in Appendix A. Alternatively, they can refer to the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) table if the WBS is also included.

'Category': Choose from ‘Old’, ‘New’, or ‘Modified’. Indicate ‘New’ if this task did not appear in the original Gantt chart from the Project Proposal. Indicate ‘Modified’ if the task was included in the original Gantt chart, but has since changed in nature or should be renamed. For tasks listed as ‘Modified’, also indicate under ‘Task title’ the previous title used.

‘Status’: Choose from 'Completed', 'Delayed', 'In progress', or 'Cancelled'. A delayed milestone is one that should have been completed by now, whereas a milestone that is ‘In progress’ is not yet completed but on schedule.

'Old completion date': For 'old' tasks, specify the original expected completion date. Leave blank for new tasks.

'New completion date': For completed tasks, record the date of completion. If the task is 'in progress' or ‘delayed’ put down the expected completion date.

Provide a brief report for each individual task listed in the above table. For tasks that have been cancelled entirely, a brief justification is required. The format for reporting tasks and an example of a complete and incomplete task can be found here. A blank template can be found here:

- Word (left click to open the word file. Or right click your mouse and click on “Open weblink in browser”)
- [pdf]

Some comments when reporting on tasks:

- 'Mission Accomplished': You must provide sufficient and adequate documentation in order to substantiate your claims of completing or progressing on a task. Each task should be verifiable, and have some tangible result or milestone associated with it. Examples include:
  - a circuit schematic
  - a completed test plan document
  - key results from a research study (rather than simply saying that you studied something)
  - experimental or simulation results
  - For software, source code listings and class descriptions are a start but do little to show the work involved or that software actually works. Provide actual samples of the outputs of your program where possible. Also for larger programs provide documentation such as a functional specification, pseudo-code, state diagram, or flow chart.
The examples listed above are the natural products of your work, and are not produced simply for the sake of writing reports.

Summarize the key significance or results from the documentation you’ve provided and attach the actual detailed documentation into the appendix. Excerpts of code can be included but do not bother to attach thick program listings!

- **Actions vs. Decisions:** make a clear distinction between Actions and Decisions.

  **Actions** focus on the activity that went behind the decisions. What alternatives did you explore? How did you compare the alternatives? How did you overcome any challenges?

  **Decisions** result from the actions. Which of the competing solutions did you choose? Did you decide to change a milestone? Add further testing? Do further investigation? For each decision, provide a sentence or two to justify it.

**A note on changing tasks and milestones:** Some groups do not develop an adequate work plan as part of their Project Proposal and thus find themselves in a dilemma when they submit their progress report because the milestones no longer make sense. Under these circumstances, the students may choose to make substantial changes to the Work Plan and Gantt chart. This is acceptable, but students must provide adequate justification: it is not acceptable to change a project because you haven’t worked hard enough and now want to make it easier. Some examples of common problems and the questions you should ask yourself can be found [here](http://www.ecf.utoronto.ca/~writing/handbook-docum1b.html).

**F. Conclusion / Progress Assessment**

Conclude the document by briefly summarizing the current status of your work and of the overall project and give the reader a sense of whether or not the project is on track and the expected final outcome of the project. Provide a balanced assessment that is positive, yet honest.

**G. References**

References must be listed in the order they appear in the text, in IEEE form. Refer to [http://www.ecf.utoronto.ca/~writing/handbook-docum1b.html](http://www.ecf.utoronto.ca/~writing/handbook-docum1b.html). An excerpt from the IEEE author information kit is included [here](http://www.ecf.utoronto.ca/~writing/handbook-docum1b.html).
H. Appendices

Appendix A: Gantt Charts
This section is common to all team members. Provide an updated version of the Gantt chart along with a copy of the previous version from the Project Proposal. Each Gantt chart should be presented on a separate sheet, they should fit onto 1 page, and must cover the entire project cycle (i.e., from Sept. 2006 to April 2007). If there are no changes since the design review, simply state this and just attach the original version. If there are any changes, you must justify each of the changes briefly.

A note about the WBS: An updated Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) table can also be included if students feel it necessary (e.g. if major revisions were made to the original work plan). Ensure the task titles and task numbers are consistent for both the WBS and Gantt Chart.

Appendix B: Project Goals and Requirements
This section is common to all team members. Insert a copy of the ‘Project Goal’ and ‘Project Requirements’ sections from the Project Proposal. If there are any changes, briefly justify the changes and provide an updated version of the current Project Goals and Requirements.

Additional Appendices (max. 15 pages)
Place in the later appendices all other information does not fit the flow of the document. Some information is bulky and only summaries or snapshots will go in the main part of the document. Some background information may be required to bring the reader up to speed, but will be overly long or unsuitable for the main part of the document (which should still contain a summary of this background). There should be one Appendix for each subject and each Appendix should have a title and letter (e.g. C, D, …). Remember to provide captions for tables and figures. Each Appendix should be referred to by its letter within the body of the Progress Report. Don’t bother including anything in the appendix that you don’t actually reference it in the body of the report.