

Length of FYP or PhD Report

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Students often puzzle over how long they should write their Final Year Project (FYP) report, PhD theses, etc. This paper serves as a guide thus hopefully clears the mist and ends the puzzlement.

Correct length comes from correct amount of details and correct scope; Putting in unrelated materials demonstrate your poor understanding of the subject matter (naturally deserves "marking down")

The "correct amount of details" varies from journal papers, degree thesis, to internal reports...; even for journal papers, different journals have different norm. No matter how good you are, for example, a 20-page report would not get you a PhD degree, because that is way out of the accepted "norm". The problem here is evidently sufficient details may not be given.

For the same topic, one could write a PhD thesis, or condense into a 20-page journal paper; or even 10-page "letter". What is the difference? The key is "sufficient details"

For FYP reports, (PhD thesis alike), sufficient details should be included in the literature review that will lay down the foundation of your project: it answers why you are doing this project, how much and how deep this topic has been researched already, what is the problem; what are the methodologies available or usually used in such a research...

Sufficient details should also be included in the experimental procedure: detail enough for another person to repeat your experiment if needed. Thus, machine model, make, frequency of sampling, details of setting, temperature, load, speed, ... how data are treated, errors, ... should be included

Sufficient details are also needed in Results: tables, diagrams, plots can be generated from raw data to make a point; but to supply evidence; you also need to include necessary "raw data". Sometimes these "raw data" can be put in appendix. Usually tables are used to summarize the obtained data, and plots are generated from these data in a certain manner to demonstrate to discuss a certain trend. Both maybe needed.

Sufficient details are a must in the Discussion where you provide your "argument" or explanation of the results, theoretical development, etc. You may find yourself frequently refer the reader back to the literature review section for certain information or argument --- if so, you did good job in literature review.

Again, long reports are not necessarily good;

A rough guide:

In A-4 size paper, double line, 15 to 25 pages for journal papers, 100 pages for FYP reports, 100 ~ 150 pages for PhD thesis