



Computer Systems Engineering Department

Document Writing Guidelines

Summer 2010

The documents- reports, prelabs, postlabs, etc- that you produce are the principal way of communicating your work. Badly written documents, even if they represent excellent work, will produce negative impression and affect your grade. Consequently, care must be taken to produce documents that reflect well on your work.

General Report Structure:

Unless otherwise stated, your report should include **procedure**, **discussion**, and **conclusion**. No need for objectives and theory parts. It is recommended to merge the procedure and discussion part as one section. So, it is expected that you describe what you did, what you got as results, and comments on the results and then derive your conclusions.

Although you need to derive conclusions in **each part** of the procedure, you are also required to allocate a separate section for conclusions. This part is very important. **Typically**, you should include the most important conclusions or innovations. Do not restate the objectives in this section. This is the place where you suggest ways to improve different designs. In case of encountered problems, summarize the problem and provide the ways undertaken to tackle it. Compare and contrast the parts that have something in common.

Language:

The language of your documents is more important than you think. A well-written document contains more than clear language, correct syntax, grammar and spelling. It shall reflect on clear thinking and profound understanding of what is written.

Style and Content Regulations:

- Do not use decorations in excess. Try to use black font unless it is necessary to highlight some content with other color. Keep it formal as much as you can.
- **Each section** or main procedure of your report should state clearly the objective, methodology and reach a clear conclusion.
- Briefly describe the main features of the device you are utilizing. Only include the features that are crucial to understanding your writing.
- Do not assume that the reader already knows what you are writing about.
- All programming files (Verilog, Assembly, C, etc) and datasheets should be placed in the **Appendix**.
- All codes need to be analyzed algorithmically and in details. First describe what it does in general, then dissect the code **line by line** when necessary.
- All figures, tables, snapshots, etc, need to have caption that consists of number and name combination.

- Pay attention to your document's consistency. You should use the same font size and style through the report unless necessary- maybe the titles and subtitles need to have larger font size. All figures should be made using the same software or tool. For example, if you designed a digital circuit on Quartus, use it to design the other circuits. Do not mix things unless it is undoable otherwise.
- Always number you pages.
- It is not allowed to take snapshots if you can produce them. For example, tables should be produced by yourself and not copied as photos.
- **Describe the whole before the parts.** Give an overview of what you are describing, then go to the details.
- More is as harmful as less. Try to communicate your writing in the minimum, though enough, required amount of writing. Think of it as a basis.
- If the system did not work as planned, give an overview of the debugging steps that you followed to make it work.
- If you encounter questions stated in the experiment manual. Try to discuss them, but do not answer them like this: Question#1: blah blah blah. Do not assume that the reader know the question.

Honesty:

Always reference your writing whenever you made use of any resource (including lab manual!). Otherwise it would be considered cheating. **Never ever** copy and paste any piece of information unless quoted. The writing should be completely yours.

Regarding this note the following:

- It is always recommended that you make use of someone else's work. But remember to **summarize** what you **read** and **write** it in your own words.
- It is not **unusual** to quote some others writing. In such cases, use quotation marks to indicate quotation and be aware of not quoting out of context. More importantly, reference your work. Example: "quoted text ..."[1] and in the references section it might look like either
 - [1] Stallings, William - Cryptography and Network Security, 4th edition. Prentice Hall, 2006
 - [1] <http://java.sun.com/developer/technicalArticles/javame/nfc/index.html#4>, Accessed on Jan 2009

Submission and Deadlines:

Deadlines:

All documents must be submitted no later than 1 week after the experiment date. Submission is considered **late** if it is submitted during the second week after the experiment date. Late submission will reduce your mark, but little is better than null. Always submit, even late, but not too late!

Moreover, all the group members abide by the same responsibility of the team work documents, such as reports.

Example:

If you did your experiment on Monday 10th, then normal submission deadline is: Monday 17th. Late submission deadline is: Monday 24th.